

Edited by
KAREN RADNER

State Correspondence in the Ancient World

*From New Kingdom Egypt
to the Roman Empire*



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Preface

I am very fortunate to have Simon Corcoran, Amélie Kuhrt (both University College London) and Mark Weeden (School of Oriental and African Studies) as my colleagues here in London. On this specific occasion, I want to thank them for their willingness to participate in this book project. I am also much obliged to Riet van Bremen (UCL) who, once it became clear that she would not be able to take on a more active role, promptly put me in touch with Alice Bencivenni (Bologna). Alice as well as Michael Jursa (Vienna) and Jana Mynářová (Prague) were obvious choices for this enterprise and I cannot thank them enough for quickly and graciously accepting my invitation to join the project. I am hugely indebted to all contributors for their generosity with their time and knowledge and especially their readiness to engage with a topic which stands at the core of the research project “Mechanisms of communication in an ancient empire: The correspondence between the king of Assyria and his magnates in the 8th century BC” that I directed during 2008–2013, funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council.

I am very grateful to the AHRC for providing the funds for the two meetings that brought the contributors together at UCL in order to discuss the chapter drafts for this book. The primary sources were the subject of the first meeting on April 9, 2011, and we enjoyed the company and profited from the knowledge of Riet van Bremen, Mikko Luukko (then UCL), Matthias Müller (Basel), and Bella Sandwell (Bristol). The second meeting was convened on July 25, 2012 and focused on the mechanisms of long-distance state communication.

I would like to thank Stefan Vranka at Oxford University Press for the interest he has taken in this book project since we first discussed it in 2010, and I am grateful to him as well as Walter Scheidel, in his role as editor of *Oxford Studies in Early Empires*, for accepting this book as part of that series. AHRC funding enabled the creation of maps by Alessio Palmisano, the editorial work of Silvie Zamazalová on the bibliography, and the index produced by Frans van Koppen. My thanks to all of them for their fast and diligent work.

List of Contributors

ALICE BENCIVENNI is Ricercatore Confermato and teaches Greek epigraphy at the University of Bologna. Her research focuses on the relationship between central power and local authorities in the Hellenistic world and the political communication between Hellenistic kings and the *poleis* through Greek inscriptions. Her publications include the monograph *Progetti di riforme costituzionali nelle epigrafi greche dei secoli IV-II a.C.* (Bologna, 2003).

SIMON CORCORAN is Senior Research Fellow at University College London, where he is currently studying the survival and use of Roman law from the 5th to 11th centuries AD as part of the *Projet Volterra*. His publications include the monograph *The Empire of the Tetrarchs: Imperial Pronouncements and Government, AD 284–324* (Oxford, 1996, rev. 2000) and numerous articles on the constitutional, administrative, and legal history of the Roman Empire.

MICHAEL JURSA is Professor of Assyriology at the University of Vienna, where he currently directs a research project on Babylonian epistolography in the first millennium BC. A leading specialist in the history of Babylonia in the first millennium BC, his books include *Neo-Babylonian Legal and Administrative Documents: Typology, Contents and Archives* (Münster, 2005) and *Aspects of the Economic History of Babylonia in the First Millennium BC: Economic Geography, Economic Mentalities, Agriculture, the Use of Money and the Problem of Economic Growth* (Münster, 2010).

AMÉLIE KUHRT recently retired from her post as Professor of Ancient Near Eastern History at University College London. She has published widely on the history and historiography of the ancient Near East but is best known for her expertise on the Achaemenid and Seleucid empires. Her books include *The Persian Empire: A Corpus of Sources from the Achaemenid Period* (London, 2007) and *The Ancient Near East, c.3000–330 BC* (London, 1995).

JANA MYNÁŘOVÁ is Lecturer at the Czech Institute of Egyptology at the Charles University Prague. Her research focus lies on Egypt during the New Kingdom period and its relationship with the Near East. Her many publications

on the Amarna corpus include the monograph *Language of Amarna—Language of Diplomacy: Perspectives on the Amarna Letters* (Prague, 2007).

KAREN RADNER is Professor of Ancient Near Eastern History at University College London. Her research concentrates on the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Her books include *Die neuassyrischen Texte aus Tall Šeḫ Ḥamad* (Berlin, 2002), *Die Macht des Namens: Altorientalische Strategien zur Selbsterhaltung* (Wiesbaden, 2005) and, edited with E. Robson, *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture* (Oxford, 2011).

MARK WEEDEN is Lecturer in Ancient Near Eastern Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He is the author of *Hittite Logograms and Hittite Scholarship* (Wiesbaden, 2011) and epigrapher of several excavations in Turkey; his research focuses on the written cultures of northern Syria and Anatolia.

Introduction

Long-Distance Communication and the Cohesion of Early Empires

Karen Radner

THIS book takes its departure from a simple claim: long-distance communication plays a key role in the cohesion and stability of early states, and in turn, these states invest in long-term communication strategies and networks. As reliable and fast long-distance communication facilitates the successful delegation of power from the center to the local administrations, the creation and maintenance of the necessary infrastructure to support this is a key strategy of the central state, especially in the case of early empires, where the need to control a geographically extensive region from a relatively small central unit (be that conceived as a locality or a group of people) presents a permanent challenge to state cohesion.

Not only is this a straightforward assertion, it is also not new. While this volume may be the first book in recent times to emphasize strongly the link between an empire's long-distance communication strategies and its cohesion, this point was quite obvious already in the 5th century BC to the Greek historians Herodotus (*Histories*, VIII 98) and Xenophon (*Cyropaedia*, VIII 6.17–18), who showed themselves hugely impressed by the relay messenger network of the Persian Empire (chapter 5). Writes Xenophon:

It is plain that this is the fastest land travel on earth. And it is excellent to be apprised of everything as quickly as possible so that one can deal with it at top speed.

In the 2nd century AD, the Roman orator Aelius Aristides (*Or. XXVI: To Rome* 33; chapter 7) makes the very same point regarding the cohesion of the Roman Empire and the effectiveness of long-distance communications between emperor and governors:

It is easy for him (i.e. the emperor) to stay where he is and manage the entire civilized world by letters, which arrive almost as soon as they are written, as if they were carried by winged envoys.

In both quotes, the emphasis on the amazing speed of communication and the blanket coverage supposedly achieved by these imperial regimes is a rhetorical flourish that can easily be deconstructed. Stressing the central role of long-distance state communications for the government and cohesion of geographically extensive states, on the other hand, provides a useful framework for discussing and analyzing ancient state correspondence, and this theme serves as the present volume's leitmotif.¹

GEOGRAPHICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL SCOPE

Chapters 3–7, the bulk of this book, deal with the communication strategies of the dominant Iron Age empires of the Mediterranean and the Middle East, from pathfinder Assyria to paragon Rome. All of these states were very large, even by modern standards, encompassing several modern countries in each case. The central region of these empires shifted—from northern Iraq to southern Iraq, then across the formidable Zagros mountain range to the Iranian Fars region, back again to southern Iraq, and then across the Mediterranean Sea to Italy and finally to western Anatolia—and as with the heartland, the states' geographical expanse changed significantly. But there is considerable territorial overlap among them, most importantly on the Eastern Mediterranean coast, in Syria and in Anatolia; consequently, the relevant overland routes were used by all regimes—and of course by their successor states.

The relay communication system that so amazed Herodotus and Xenophon can be demonstrated to be an innovation of the Assyrian Empire (chapter 3), but state interest and state investment in organizing and maintaining reliable mechanisms of long-distance communication are well attested long before then, if on a more limited scale. Thus, the first two chapters of this book are devoted to New Kingdom Egypt and the Hittite state in the so-called imperial phase, two major state systems of the Late Bronze Age. They share with other potential case studies, such as the Early Bronze state of the so-called Third Dynasty of Ur (Allred 2010) or the Middle Bronze kingdom of Mari (Lafont 1997), the availability of good primary source corpora illustrating the maintenance of state messenger services. However, the New Kingdom and the Hittite state have been chosen as most relevant here because of their chronological proximity to the first millennium empires, and also because of the obvious geographical challenges presented to the long-distance communication of these states: the deserts separating Egypt from the Levant and the difficult mountain landscapes of Anatolia needed to be overcome.

The resultant book covers the period from the 15th century BC to the 6th century AD. In the absence of major technological advances, the basic challenges of long-distance communication remain constant until steam railroads and electric telegraphy radically changed the picture in the 19th century AD. The scope of the

book could therefore easily have been expanded, but a relatively tight chronological and geographical focus seemed sensible in order to keep the volume to manageable size and enable in-depth discussion among the contributors, who convened twice at UCL to discuss their draft chapters. The goal was to produce a coherent volume with chapters based on original research yet organized along broadly the same lines and written in a similar style. It is hoped that the result is accessible to the non-specialist while offering insight and at times new materials to the specialist.

OBJECTIVES

Each of the seven chapters focuses on a single state: New Kingdom Egypt and the Hittite state, the Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, and Seleukid empires (the latter with reference also to the Attalid state) and the Imperium Romanum. Each chapter discusses the primary source materials—that is, the surviving examples of state correspondence in their historical context—and traces their transmission: what do we have and what don't we have, and why. The available primary sources are state letters in Akkadian (in the Assyrian and Babylonian dialects), Aramaic, Egyptian, Greek, Hittite, and Latin. This linguistically diverse material is distributed chronologically and geographically rather unevenly and moreover takes a wide range of forms. Original letters survive sometimes on papyri (chapter 1, 5, 7) and much more frequently, owing to the enduring nature of the medium, as clay tablets (chapters 1–4). We know that state correspondence was also recorded on leather scrolls and wax tablets, but not a single example, from any of the periods under study, has been recovered that would document a state letter. Extracts of original letters survive as quotes in other letters (chapters 3–4) but also form the key source for the compilation for the Roman law codices (chapter 7). And finally, there are copies of original letters, publicly displayed in the form of stone inscriptions or other media (chapter 6–7) or as part of manuscripts that entered the scholarly tradition (chapter 7).

Beyond providing an in-depth introduction and a guide to the available primary sources, each chapter explores the mechanisms of state communication. Shared infrastructure, such as the already mentioned routes, are suggestive of an element of continuity, but there are of course many different ways in which long-distance communications can be organized and operated. In order to bring out continuities or at least structural similarities in long-distance communications and highlight differences, the comparative approach taken in this volume required the contributors to consider a set of key questions:

- What are the roles of envoys and letters in long-distance state communications?
- What is the role of scribes or secretaries?

- What languages are used for the state correspondence?
- Is there a privileged state communication system? How is it organized?
- How is information safeguarded while in transit?
- Are there patterns and routines of state communication?
- Are there obligatory rules of communication?
- When and how are letters publicized?
- Are letters archived for future reference?

To a certain extent, the available evidence dictates the depth and detail of the analyses in the individual chapters. The two meetings among the authors, during which all draft chapters were discussed, proved extremely profitable in identifying related or comparable issues across periods, and they led the authors to explore various aspects after they had first emerged in other chapters. This added, it is hoped, much texture to the individual chapters and will allow the reader to make links and compare and contrast; cross-references between chapters are meant to offer some guidance. The following is but one way of tracing connections between the chapters.

SOME EMERGING THEMES

From the mid-2nd millennium BC onward, messengers on horseback, or on certain routes travelling by chariot, set the top speed for long-distance communications. New Kingdom Egypt (c. 1530–1069 BC) and the Hittite state during its so-called “imperial” period (c. 1450–1200 BC) both controlled territories far removed from the state’s core region, and the exchange of messages between the central administration and its representatives in some of these holdings is reasonably well attested. There are clear indications that both of these states invested in establishing an infrastructure, albeit of limited scope, that would enable regular long-distance communications across difficult terrain. Envoys, who held considerable social and political status and personal clout, were the preferred way to communicate long-distance, with written messages playing only a secondary role.

The results of the recent and pioneering clay analysis of cuneiform tablets bearing letters from the correspondence of the New Kingdom pharaohs Amenhotep III (r. c. 1388–1351 BC) and Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten (r. c. 1351–1334 BC) suggest that the Egyptian administrative centers in Gaza and Beth-Shean served as interchange stations for communications of the state, where Pharaoh’s messages were distributed and those from the Levantine client rulers accepted for delivery and, if they were not yet recorded as letters, written down on clay tablets. Communications in the southern conquered regions of Nubia in modern Sudan may well have been organized along similar lines, although there, papyrus would be the expected medium of correspondence. Only a letter of the Great Steward

of Memphis to Amenhotep IV affords us a glimpse of the otherwise lost papyrus correspondence of that period. As Jana Mynářová shows in chapter 1, there was at least a basic infrastructure in place to facilitate long-distance communication. Moreover, the participants in state correspondence were clearly united by mutually accepted notions of etiquette. But as the evidence shows, including that from the so-called Records Office from the capital city of Akhetaten (modern Tell el-Amarna), there is little apparent effort to standardize the Egyptian state correspondence. It was conducted in several media, using several languages and various scripts.

When we turn to the Hittite state, called Hatti by contemporaries, then the state correspondence of Tudhaliya III is by far the best-attested corpus, linked to the fact that he ruled during a time of crisis in the early 15th century when the Hittite heartland around Hattusa (modern Boğazköy) was invaded and many cities were burned to the ground, thereby preserving the clay tablets contained therein. As a consequence, Tudhaliya's temporary residence city of Sapinuwa (modern Ortaköy) yielded about 500 letters from the internal and international correspondence of the Hittite state, and another 97 letters were found at the provincial center of Tapikka (modern Maşathöyük). On a far more limited scale, parts of the state correspondence of the period from the mid-15th century onward, when Hatti increasingly dominated the political fortunes of Anatolia and northern Syria, were recovered at Hattusa, the majority of them from the royal citadel of Büyükkale. But these letters come mostly from secondary contexts: there was, as Mark Weeden's analysis in chapter 2 highlights, no concerted effort to archive the state correspondence systematically. This is also true for the other states under discussion in this volume.

Like New Kingdom Egypt, the Hittite state relied on a mix of writing media and, to a lesser degree, various languages and scripts, with little in the way of standardization. Clay tablets were used routinely alongside wooden writing boards (which are preserved only in extraordinary circumstances, and so far never with their message intact) and perhaps also lead strips. Although the majority of the known correspondence was conducted in Hittite, there is good evidence for the use of Akkadian and Luwian. The latter may have been as important as Hittite as an epistolary language of state correspondence, if the hotly debated hypothesis that this language and its incised hieroglyphic script were the preferred writing system for inscribing writing boards proves to be correct. The scribes writing Hittite state letters frequently append their own private messages, so-called "piggy-back letters," at the end of the primary message, taking advantage of their access to long-distance communication. This demonstrates that administrative support personnel were dispatched from the center to the provinces, as is also the case, for example, in the Assyrian Empire; however, the evidence that the scribes would be allowed to make use of the state infrastructure for their own private communications stands in sharp contrast to the severely restricted access

to the amenities of, for instance, the Assyrian or Roman state communication networks. Although details remain tantalizingly vague, the Hittite state seems to have maintained a privileged system of “Long Roads” that would have enabled messengers on state business to navigate the challenging Anatolian landscape under reasonably protected circumstances.

As Karen Radner argues in chapter 3, the Neo-Assyrian Empire of the mid-9th century BC must be seen as a turning point in the history of communications. It saw the creation and implementation of an innovative, and very expensive, long-distance high-speed information network designed for the exclusive needs of the state—the direct forerunner of the Persian relay dispatch service so admired by Herodotus and Xenophon. Once the Assyrian Empire had reached a certain size, greater communication speed was thought essential enough to venture a step that may be seen as putting the safety of the message at risk. For the first time, the relationship of intimate trust that bound the sender and his message to one chosen messenger was set aside in order to enable greater speed in communications. As an alternative to the one messenger who traveled the entire distance with this message, delivering it either in writing or orally, this distance could now also be covered by a series of mounted couriers, each responsible for a fixed stage of the road, who passed on a letter in relay. The trusted messenger continued to be regularly employed, especially when confidentiality or the ability to make decisions on the spot was of paramount importance. This is clear also for all other states under investigation in the following chapters. Indeed, when Augustus set up a communications network for the Roman Empire (chapter 7), he decided against the relay system in preference for one messenger traveling the whole distance, regularly changing horses or carriages at imperial post stations, “since the same men who bring the dispatches from any place can, if occasion demands, be questioned as well” (Suetonius, *Div. Aug.* 49.3). This decision, of course, reduced the speed of the delivery, but the construction of paved roads may have gone some way to compensate for that. Like previous systems, the use of the *cursus publicus*, as the Roman state communications network was known, required official authorization.

During the reign of Sargon II of Assyria (r. 721–705 BC), we have the best available source record for the otherwise more patchily preserved state correspondence of the Assyrian Empire. About 1,200 original letters, mostly from the latter part of his reign, were excavated in the form of highly standardized clay tablets. Originally, these letters would have been enclosed in sealed clay envelopes. The bulk of the documents was found in a palace that was constructed only after Sargon’s death and moreover in Nineveh, a city that he did not use as a residence. The corpus raises a number of questions regarding archival practices, but it is also clear that the surviving letters are only a relatively small part of the original correspondence. The amount of state letters generated here by the governors can be compared with the volume of the Roman emperor’s letters issued in the years

AD 293–294, as compiled in the Hermogenian Code. As Simon Corcoran shows in chapter 7, the available evidence allows the reconstruction of a high volume of royal communications that could easily run into the thousands each year, and it moreover highlights how heavily the patterns of issue depended on the emperor's movement. Seleukos I (r. 305–281 BC), as quoted in an anecdote of Plutarch (*An seni sit gerenda respublica*, 11; chapter 6), had a point when he complained about the great number of letters a king was required to deal with.

With the expansion of the Assyrian Empire, the hugely expensive relay system was extended to link all new provinces to the Assyrian heartland and each other. By 670 BC, the Royal Road, as the imperial communication system was called, connected within one organizational framework an unprecedented expanse of regions, from the Mediterranean coast between Gaza and Adana to the Iranian lands beyond the massive Zagros mountain range as far as Hamadan, from the Persian Gulf to the Anatolian mountain regions between Malatya and Batman across the Taurus main ridge. When the Assyrian Empire disintegrated at the end of the 7th century BC, the Royal Road system did not. Its successor state, the Neo-Babylonian Empire (612–539 BC), continued to invest in the maintenance of the infrastructure, as a number of administrative documents illustrate.

However, there is relatively little that can be classified as Babylonian state correspondence, in sharp contrast to the rich primary sources discussed in chapters 1–3. The available material derives mostly from the archives of the main temples of the Babylonian cities Sippar and Uruk. It is possible, to some degree, to reconstruct the communications of the king and his court on the basis of the letters of the administrative personnel active in these temples, as they frequently quote and refer to the state correspondence. While letters exchanged between state officials survive in relatively limited numbers for the other periods under review here, they constitute the lion's share of the Neo-Babylonian evidence, albeit limited to the sphere of the temples. As Michael Jursa argues in chapter 4, the Neo-Babylonian state administration preferred Aramaic scribes and Aramaic as an administrative language, while the traditional Babylonian institutions, most importantly the temples, continued to rely on cuneiform and therefore produced the bulk of the surviving clay tablets, including letters which follow format standards closely parallel to the Assyrian state correspondence. Already the administration of the Neo-Assyrian Empire relied on Aramaic as a second language in addition to Assyrian (chapter 3). But at least in the late 8th century BC, it was obligatory, even for vassal rulers from beyond the traditional reach of cuneiform culture, to conduct the state correspondence in cuneiform and either Assyrian or Babylonian, but not in the alphabetic script.

Aramaic emerges as the key language of the Persian state correspondence. As Amélie Kuhrt shows in chapter 5, it did not oust the use of local languages for local matters, but its preferred use in long-distance communications can be demonstrated across the Persian Empire (c. 550–330 BC) from Egypt to Bactria.

The available documents, although very limited in number owing to the use of easily perishable papyrus and leather, exhibit a similarly high degree of standardization, as noted already in the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian cases. The Roman evidence, too, allows the discussion of issues of language choice, as Simon Corcoran demonstrates in chapter 7. Although the official language of the Roman emperor's pronouncements was Latin, some of the state correspondence of the Roman Empire was conducted in Greek, owing to the bilingualism of the administration of the eastern parts of the realm. The balance shifted after the loss of the western empire: from the reign of emperor Justinian I (r. 527–565) onward, state communications were generally conducted in Greek, while the use of Latin was limited to the now peripheral Latin-speaking areas in the Balkans, Italy, and Africa.

The lack of primary materials from the Persian Empire, for which not a single instance of a royal letter survives, is to some degree offset by the wide range of sources describing Persian state communications, from the works of the already mentioned Greek historians and other classical works to the Bible. Moreover, the financial aspects of state communications are documented in archival records from the Persian heartland. These administrative texts demonstrate that the Royal Road system had been enlarged to match the extent of the empire and connected all regions between the eastern Mediterranean and the Hindu Kush. A group of Aramaic letters recorded on leather, published only in 2012, shows the Persian long-distance communication system in good working order at the time of the conquest of Bactria under Alexander the Great (r. 336–323 BC). Although it is therefore a reasonable assumption that the Seleukid state took over the existing infrastructure and organization, the argument remains largely *e silentio* because of the otherwise very limited evidence. But that the relay system was still in use for state correspondence at the time of Augustus (r. 27 BC–AD 14) is reasonably certain, as the first Roman emperor trialed such a system before deciding against it (chapter 7).

The available sources for Seleukid state communications are of a very particular nature which makes comparison with the previous periods difficult. As Alice Bencivenni demonstrates in chapter 6 when analyzing Seleukid as well as Attalid practice on the basis of 97 epigraphic documents, Hellenistic state correspondence survives almost exclusively in the form of royal letters that were turned into public monuments by inscribing them on steles or on the facades of public buildings. This happened most frequently at the initiative of the city or community that profited from the king's word. Yet there are also instances, all dating to the century between c. 250–150 BC, where it was the king who explicitly ordered the drafting of a stone copy. That the king would demand that his letters be publicized has parallels in the interaction between the Assyrian kings of the 7th century BC and the Babylonian cities as well as other communities within the empire that enjoyed a high degree of self-administration. These letters share with the

Hellenistic examples an emphasis on the king's role as benefactor. Unlike them, however, they do not stipulate the creation of public monuments but conceive of the publication exclusively as a public proclamation.

The normative value of royal letters provides an obvious connection between Hellenistic practice and that of other states, earlier and later. The legally binding function of royal letters can be demonstrated for several states under investigation here, at least for those sectors of society without patrimonial ties of patronage and dependency to the royal house and the resultant negotiating power that exempted them from such rules. In the Assyrian Empire, petitioners appealed to receive "the king's word," this being also the term for a royal letter, after its introductory formula (chapter 3). The same terminology was applied in the Babylonian Empire, and Michael Jursa in chapter 4 discusses instances where "the king's word" was used and quoted as a general ruling. But the implications for legal practice emerge most clearly from the Roman evidence. As Simon Corcoran analyzes in chapter 7, most available sources for the state correspondence of the Roman Empire survive as part of the imperial law codes. Compilations such as the Theodosian Code of AD 437 and the Justinian Code of AD 534 were created as definitive collections by which the state sought to set apart those royal letters meant to serve as legal precedents from those deemed relevant only in the specific case for which they were issued.

There is only a single original letter with the emperor's subscription, a letter of Theodosius II (r. 402–450) on papyrus. This text and many other documents of and related to the ancient state correspondences are illustrated in the figures accompanying the chapters, together with images of the seals that were used in many contexts to safeguard and/or authenticate state letters. The illustrations allow the reader to appreciate the materiality of state correspondence and support the many quotes from the primary sources in making tangible the intersecting streams of information that connected and sustained these ancient states.

Egyptian State Correspondence of the New Kingdom

The Letters of the Levantine Client Kings in the Amarna Correspondence and Contemporary Evidence

Jana Mynářová¹

FROM a historical perspective, the New Kingdom period, as we designate half a millennium of Bronze Age Egyptian history (c. 1530–1069 BC), is far from homogeneous. It is conventionally seen as beginning with the expulsion of the Hyksos by Ahmose I, and it ends with a period of unrest and instability leading to the loss of political unity at the end of the 20th Dynasty. During these five centuries, the Egyptian state, its government, and its administrative system underwent significant development, and many elements typical of the early phase of the period were later changed or even completely abandoned.² To address the changing nature of political and administrative relations between the Egyptian state and its client kingdoms during the period of the New Kingdom, one would have to consider a large number of sources, both textual and archaeological, from different political and cultural settings.

As a consequence, this chapter does not attempt to cover the entire period but instead takes its chronological and geographical focus from a unique corpus of textual sources that allows us to gain a better understanding of the New Kingdom's political, cultural, and social organization of its holdings in the Levant (Syro-Palestine) during the Late Bronze Age (Fig. 1.1). The so-called Amarna tablets³ date roughly to the third quarter of the 14th century BC and represent part of the state correspondence with allied states and vassals of some of the most prominent rulers of the 18th Dynasty: Amenhotep III (r. c. 1388–1351 BC) and his son and successor Amenhotep IV, better known as Akhenaten (r. c. 1351–1334 BC).⁴ The available text corpus from Amarna consists of fewer than 400 clay tablets and fragments, inscribed in the cuneiform script.⁵ Of these texts, 346⁶ are letters,⁷ although some of them are mere fragments and their messages are only partially, if at all, understandable. These texts represent incoming and outgoing state correspondence and form the documentary basis for this chapter, which

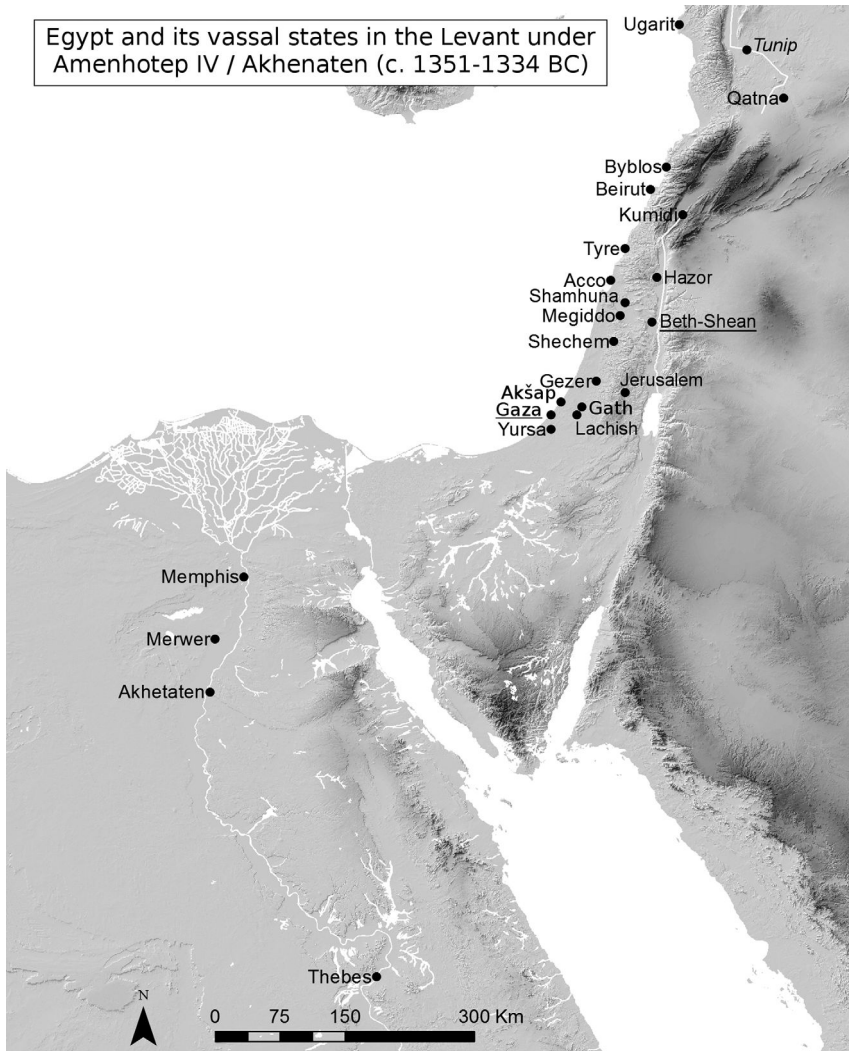


FIGURE 1.1. Map indicating the sites in Egypt and the Levant discussed in this chapter.

aims to analyze the methods of communication between the Egyptian center and its Levantine periphery.

1 EGYPT'S ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION DURING THE 18TH DYNASTY

Let us begin with a brief sketch of the structure of the Egyptian government in the later phases of the 18th Dynasty. In a simplified, schematic way, the Egyptian government can be seen as a tri-nominal structure, consisting of separate

bureaucracies for the dynasty itself, the internal government of Egypt proper, and the government of conquered regions.⁸ While the internal government can be divided into four main branches—civil government, religious government, military government, and government of the royal domain—geographic contexts played a key role in the organization of government of the conquered regions.

In the southern conquered regions of Nubia (modern Sudan),⁹ the Egyptian administrative body was headed by the official today commonly called the Viceroy of Kush, whose actual title was “King’s Son of Kush, Governor of the Southern Lands.” He was supported by two deputies for each of the Nubian main regions (Deputy of Wawat and Deputy of Kush), with the mayors of Egyptian centers and the chiefs of the indigenous tribal groups further down in the hierarchy. The military forces, on the other hand, were under the single control of the “Battalion Commander of Kush.”

In the northern conquered regions in the Levant, the Egyptian government was usually represented by the Governor of Northern Lands, under whose command both the client kings and the Egyptian battalion commanders were ranked. In the Amarna corpus, several officials of the Egyptian administration in the Levant are mentioned by name, either as recipients of letters or mentioned in them.¹⁰ In many cases, however, the officials are identified by their titles only,¹¹ although the traditional title of the Governor of the Northern Lands is not attested. Officials with both Egyptian and non-Egyptian names occur.¹² Only one official, Tutu, can be reliably identified also in the contemporary Egyptian sources.¹³ It must be stressed how very limited our knowledge of the prosopography of the Amarna period is. The bulk of data comes either from tombs in Amarna and Thebes belonging to the highest officials of Akhenaten’s government¹⁴ or from Hieratic dockets written mostly on wine jars, other containers, and ostraca.¹⁵ There is a dearth of information from the northern administrative center of Memphis, where evidence on the government officials active in the Levant would be most likely to occur.

Although the available data are admittedly limited, it seems that relations between the inner Egyptian government and that of the conquered regions were close and could even overlap during the Amarna period. We must not assume that the governmental responsibilities, as described above, were neatly separated from one another. One well-documented case is the already mentioned Tutu, who was one of the highest officials in Akhetaten (Tell el-Amarna) according to the Egyptian evidence, most importantly his tomb in Amarna (no. 8).¹⁶ His manifold titles, as recorded there, include “Chamberlain,” “Chief Servant of king Akhenaten in the House of the Aten,” “Overseer of all Craftsmen of the Lord of the Two Lands,” “Overseer of all the Works of His Majesty,” “Overseer of Silver and Gold of the Lord of the Two Lands,” “Overseer of the Treasury of the Aten,” and “Chief Spokesman of the Entire Land”.¹⁷ these titles point chiefly to the sphere of internal government, including the administration of the royal domain as well as religious and civil

government. But the evidence of the Amarna letters shows that Tutu was also directly involved with the affairs of at least one the Levantine client kings, Aziru, the ruler of Amurru (in the region of Tripoli in modern-day northern Lebanon¹⁸), who sends several letters to him, addressing him as “my father and my lord”¹⁹, while writing other letters directly to the king (Fig. 1.6).²⁰

Before we turn our attention to the Amarna correspondence, let us briefly consider the only known contemporary example of a state letter in the Egyptian language. It is part of the internal government sector. The letter is written in the Hieratic script on papyrus and preserved in the form of two fragmentary copies (P. Gurob I.1 and I.2; Fig. 1.2 and Fig. 1.3).²¹ W. M. F. Petrie found the manuscripts during his excavations of the New Kingdom palace at Merwer (modern Gurob) in the southern Faiyum region in 1889–1890.²² Why this letter was found at Merwer, and moreover in duplicate, remains obscure, and it seems that the letter was never delivered. The letter is addressed to Amenhotep IV, and already on the basis of his royal titles it can be assigned to the beginning of his reign when he still used his original titulary, which was changed in the course of his fifth regnal year, when he became Akhenaten. But conveniently, the letter is also dated, to “regnal year 5, third month of the second season, day 19.”

The letter’s sender is one Ipy, and the mentions of the Temple of Ptah, South-of-His-Wall, and other Memphite institutions reveal the city of Memphis as the

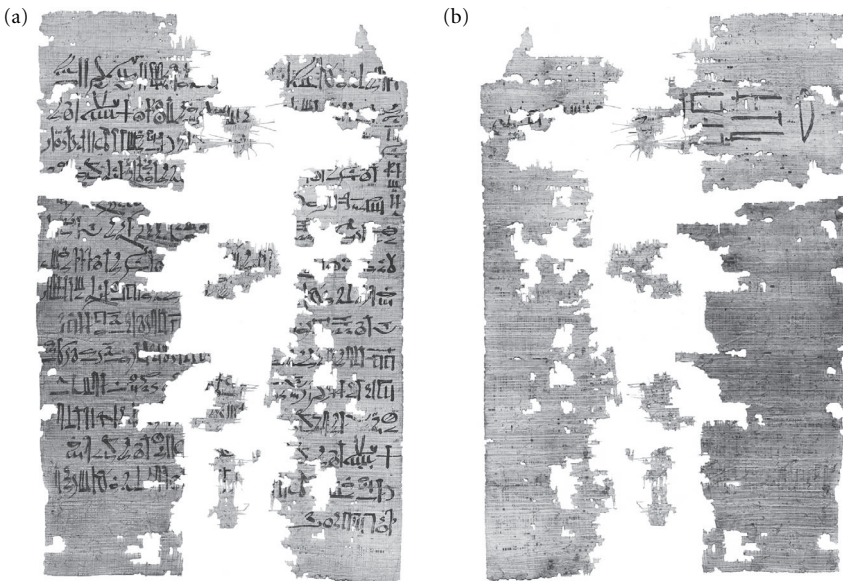


FIGURE 1.2. A papyrus with a letter of Ipy, Steward of Memphis, to Pharaoh (P. Gurob I.1). Excavated at Merwer (Gurob). Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, UC 32782. © Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, UCL.

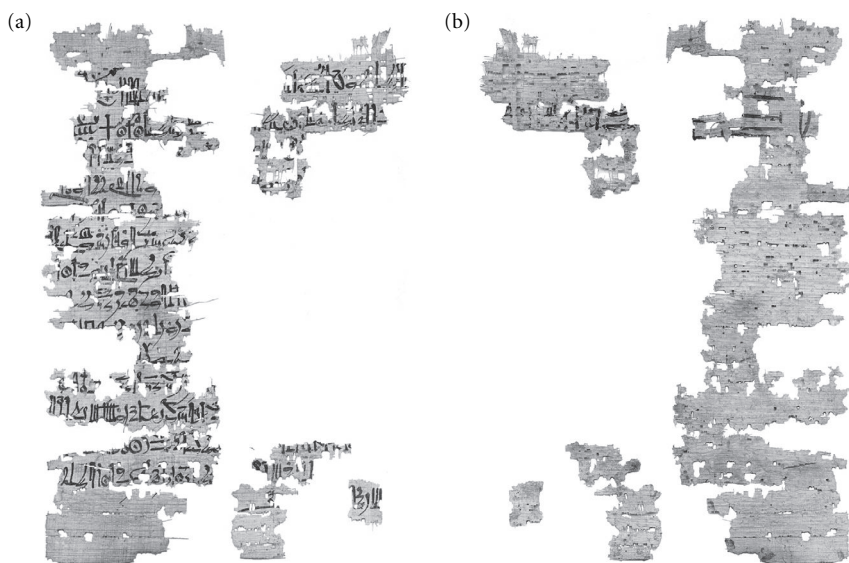


FIGURE 1.3. Another copy of the letter of Ipy, Steward of Memphis, to Pharaoh (P. Gurob I.2). Excavated at Merwer (Gurob). Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, UC 32783. © Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, UCL.

place from which the letter was sent to the king. Indeed, Ipy can be identified as the Great Steward of Memphis, who succeeded his father Amenhotep-Huy in that post.²³ After a lengthy introduction with the address and good wishes to the royal recipient, the letter contains a report on Ipy's activities in Memphis on behalf of his king:

The servant of the estate Ipy communicates to Horus, [Mighty] Bull with tall plumes; Two Ladies, Great of kingship in Karnak; Horus of Gold, Who elevates the crowns in Southern Heliopolis (= Thebes); the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, who lives on Maat, [the Lord of the Two Lands], Neferkheperure; the Son of Re, who lives on Maat, Amenhotep (= IV), the god who rules Thebes, long in his lifetime, may he live forever and ever.

May [Ptah of the] benign countenance act for you, he, who created your beauty, your true father, from whom you emerged to be ruler of the circuit of Aten. May [he] extend his [arms] and bring back [for] you the [southerners], prostrate [before] you, while the lands [are filled with] terror. May he place them all beneath your sandals, for you are the sole lord, the likeness of Re. [As long] as he shines in heaven, you shall possess eternity and perpetuity with life and years of peace.

[This is] a communication [to my lord], l.p.h. (= life, prosperity, health), to let One (= the king) know that the temple of your father Ptah,

South-of-His-Wall, the lord of Ankhtawy, is prosperous and flourishing; that the house of Pharaoh, l.p.h., is in good order; that the palace establishments of Pharaoh, l.p.h., are in good order; and that the quarter of Pharaoh, l.p.h., is in good order and secure. The offerings of all the gods and goddesses who are upon the soil of Memphis [have been issued] in full, and nothing therein has been held back, but is ready to be offered—pure, acceptable, approved and selected—on behalf of the life, prosperity and health of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, who lives on Maat, the Lord of the Two Lands, Neferkheperure-waenre; the Son of Re, living on Maat, Amenhotep (= IV), [long] in his lifetime, may he live forever and ever.

This is a communication concerning this. Regnal year 5, third month of the second season, day 19.

Address (on the verso): Pharaoh, l.p.h., the lord, from the steward of Memphis Ipy.

This letter of Ipy, the Great Steward of Memphis, affords us a tantalizing glimpse at the otherwise lost correspondence between the king and his Egyptian magnates. Officials like the chamberlain Tutu, whose correspondence we presently know only from the letters of the Levantine client rulers, would certainly have used scribes who composed letters to Pharaoh on their behalf in elegant Hieratic, following the highly specific notions of etiquette and protocol governing any communication with the king. While we do not have any of Tutu's letters in reply to Aziru of Amurru at our disposal, the fact that even Pharaoh had letters in the form of clay tablets written to his correspondents in Syro-Palestine, some of which survive,²⁴ makes it clear that the maintenance of the Egyptian state correspondence was considered a multilingual affair.

Let us now turn our attention to one of the center's of Egyptian government, the city of Akhetaten, and the "Place of the Correspondence of the Pharaoh" that was excavated there.

2 THE CITY OF AKHETATEN (TELL EL-AMARNA) AND ITS RECORDS OFFICE

Amenhotep IV, who is today much more widely known as Akhenaten "the Heretic Pharaoh," left the traditional royal and religious center of Thebes and moved his residence to a new place which he founded on virgin soil and named Akhetaten ("Horizon of the Sun-disc").²⁵ Although the decision to abandon Thebes and its traditions was made early in Akhenaten's reign, it was only in his sixth regnal year that the king and his court moved to the newly built capital and religious center. This is the site of Tell el-Amarna, located on the east bank of the Nile River, approximately 300 km south of present-day Cairo, and the Amarna letters were found there.

Amarna's layout and inner organization were carefully planned, with its outer limits defined by erecting sixteen boundary steles²⁶ which demarcated a large area on both sides of the Nile and sent a clear message of Akhenaten's grand vision for his new capital city. When the king moved with his court to the city, it was still far from complete and only some of the most essential constructions had been completed and were ready for use. In the Central City of Akhetaten (Fig. 1.4), the majority of the official and administrative buildings were by then finished, including the King's House and the Great Palace as well as a large administrative quarter, the military barracks, and granaries. Also completed stood important religious structures such as the Great Aten Temple ("House of the Sun-disc") and the Small Aten Temple ("Mansion of the Sun-disc"). But the city was abandoned shortly after the king's death, probably during the first or second regnal year of Tutankhamun (r. c. 1332–1323 BC). Therefore, Akhetaten's existence as a seat of government in the form intended by Akhenaten was rather short-lived.

The earliest letters in the Amarna corpus can be dated to the latter part of the reign of Amenhotep III (r. c. 1388–1351 BC): the correspondence found in Tell el-Amarna seems to begin around his thirtieth regnal year. Most of the documents, however, date to the reign of Amenhotep IV, better known as Akhenaten (r. c. 1351–1334 BC). Because they were discovered at a site that had not yet been founded when he died, the letters of Amenhotep III were obviously moved to Amarna when his son and successor Amenhotep IV-Akhenaten relocated the court there. Where had these tablets been stored originally? The most probable location, I would argue, seems to be the palace of Amenhotep III in Malqata in Western Thebes. On the other hand, when the city was abandoned shortly after Akhenaten's death, we must assume that part of the royal archive, presumably the most recent and relevant documentation, was transferred from Amarna to the new capital and royal residence. This could either be the traditional political and religious center of Thebes in the south, where Amenhotep III had resided, or the administrative center of Memphis in the north. We have no idea how many letters were removed from Amarna at that time.

The letters inscribed in cuneiform on the clay tablets were not dated originally, but some of them bear secondary labels in Hieratic Egyptian on their surface, annotations of the scribes working with them. Sixteen such labels mention information pertaining to time, but only four of them give specific dates.²⁷ While these and the royal names of the Egyptian rulers addressed in some of the letters allow the basic reconstruction of the archive as spanning approximately twenty years, the details of the relative and absolute chronology of the Amarna letter corpus are far from clear; especially, the final stages of the existence of the archive are the subject of much scholarly debate.²⁸

At present, the Amarna text corpus, inclusive of letters and all other texts, consists of 382 tablets and fragments. With one known exception,²⁹ all the tablets seem to originate from the site of Tell el-Amarna, and of these, most would

appear to come from a building identified by the inscription stamped on its bricks as the “Place of the Correspondence of the Pharaoh,” the so-called Records Office (Q 42.21; see Fig. 1.4 and Fig. 1.5). This construction, located in the administrative part of the city not far from the enclosure of the King’s House (P 42.2; see Fig. 1.4),³⁰ is understood to have been both a royal archive and a scriptorium, since both letters and school texts were discovered on the premises.³¹ These documents are all clay tablets, but it is certain that scribal activity in the Records

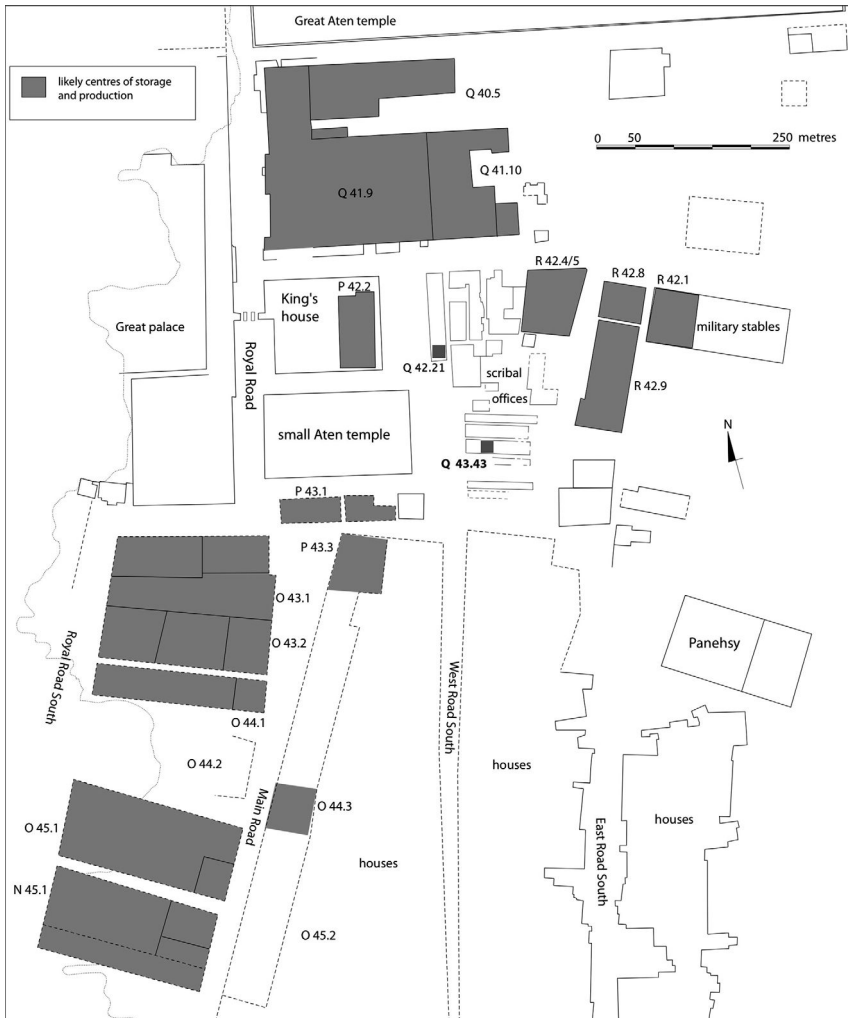


FIGURE 1.4. *The Central City of Akhetaten (Tell el-Amarna). Q 42.21 = Records Office; Q 43.43 = find spot of tablet EA 371. Adapted from Kemp & Garfi 1993: 60, Fig. 12; Mynářová 2007: 14, fig. 3.*

Office would also have encompassed writing Egyptian texts in Hieratic; the evidence of the Egyptian labels applied on the cuneiform texts makes this clear.

Most of the known Amarna clay tablets were unearthed during the first phase of the city's exploration by local people, who dug in the ruins of the city with the intention of recovering antiquities to be sold, and therefore their archaeological context was not documented. According to information contained in the *Journal d'entrée* of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, it is possible to establish that illegal excavations at the site were carried out beginning (at the latest) in the spring of 1887, for various subsets of objects, clearly identifiable as belonging to the artistically very distinctive Amarna period and originating in the region of Akhmim, Tell el-Amarna or Middle Egypt in general, were registered by museum authorities from May 1887 onward.³² From then on, over a period of time, various museums all over the world acquired Amarna tablets for their collections, usually in groups.³³ The largest collection is housed in the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin, including 202 (or 203) tablets and many small unnumbered fragments.³⁴ The British Museum in London holds 97 tablets, and the Egyptian Museum in Cairo 52. Another 21 texts are at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford,³⁵ six in the Louvre,³⁶ three in the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow, and two at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. The Oriental Museum in Chicago and the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire in Brussels each hold a single tablet. Although it is reasonably clear that all these tablets originate from Amarna, details concerning their original find location(s) or even their actual number at the time of their discovery cannot be established with any certainty. We assume that during the first, illegal and hence entirely undocumented stages of the excavations in Amarna more than 300 tablets were unearthed.

The subsequent controlled excavations in the Central City brought to light a further 32 inscribed tablets as well as two (or three) uninscribed ones. At the beginning of the 1890s, W. M. F. Petrie unearthed 21 inscribed tablets and fragments, establishing the Records Office as the likely site of origin for the earlier illicitly excavated tablet finds.³⁷ In 1913, the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft mission headed by L. Borchardt explored the area of private houses in the North and South Suburbs of the city and found two inscribed tablets.³⁸ Finally, during 1921–1936, the mission of the Egypt Exploration Fund led by T. E. Peet and later J. D. S. Pendlebury discovered nine inscribed tablets, eight of which certainly originate in the administrative part of the Central City.³⁹

The archaeological work carried out by Petrie and the other teams and their documented tablet finds allow some important conclusions. While many of the school texts⁴⁰ were discovered in areas of habitation, the letters always originated in the Records Office, with just one exception: the fragmentary tablet EA 371 (BME 134868) was discovered in Q 43.43 (see Fig. 1.4), a construction whose original purpose is not clear. Was it perhaps another office or the residence of a foreign envoy or messenger who delivered this tablet to the Egyptian court?

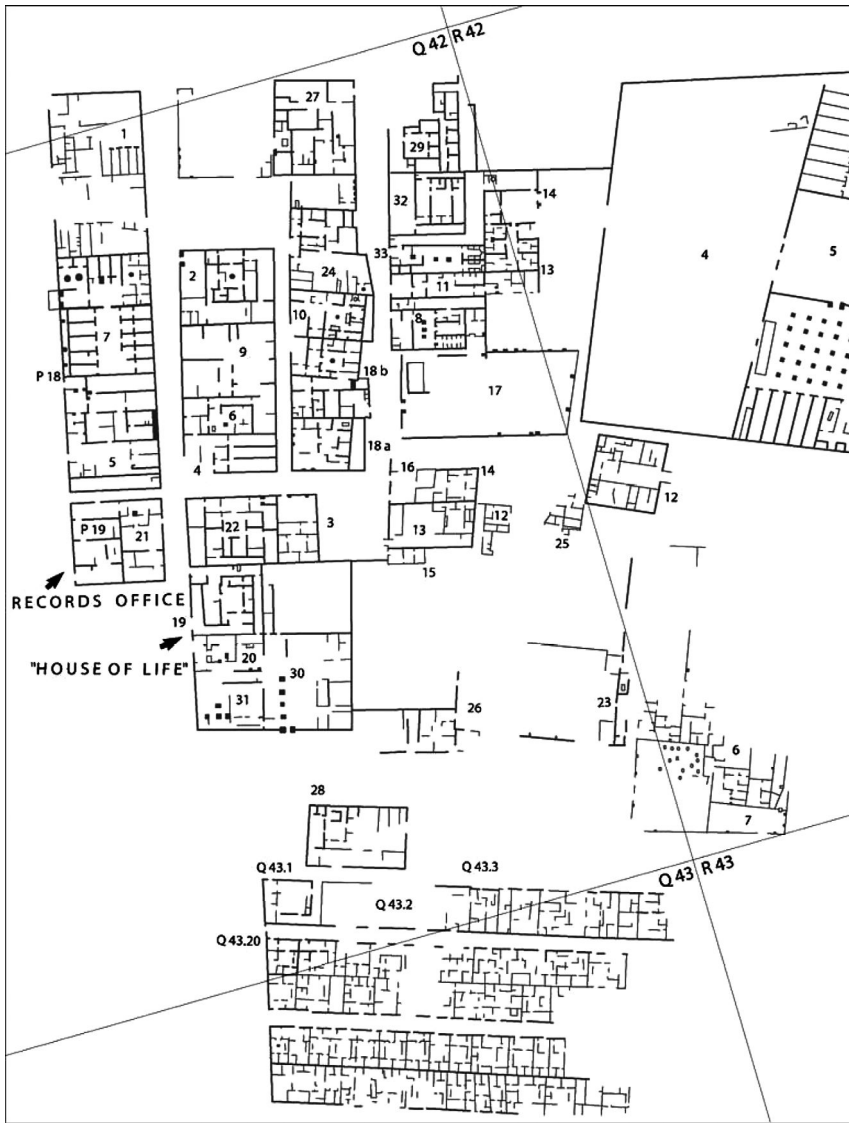


FIGURE 1.5. *The scribal offices in the Central City of Akhetaten (Tell el-Amarna). After Kemp & Garfi 1993: sheet 5.*

3 THE AMARNA STATE LETTERS: THE VASSALS' CORRESPONDENCE

Traditionally, the available epistolary corpus from Amarna is divided into two unequal subsets, based primarily on the sociopolitical status of both the sender and the addressee. The less numerous set, representing slightly over 10 percent of

all Amarna letters, is commonly understood as the international correspondence and is comprised of letters exchanged between the kings of the great powers of that time—Egypt, Babylonia, Mitanni, Hatti, and Assyria—or members of their royal courts. The correspondence of the minor states of Alashiya and Arzawa is usually included in this category. Some letters are written in Babylonian (EA 6–12, from Babylonia; EA 16, from Assyria), Assyrian (EA 15, from Assyria), Hurrian (EA 24, from Mittani), and Hittite (EA 31–32: the correspondence between Egypt and Arzawa), but the rest of this international correspondence is written in Peripheral Akkadian (see section 3.1).

The other part of the corpus, nearly 90 percent, represents letters addressed to Pharaoh or his high-ranking officials by Egypt's client kings in the Levant (Fig. 1.1). Very few letters are messages sent in the opposite direction, from the Egyptian king to the Levantine rulers. The texts usually deal with government issues—questions pertaining to security and economic issues as well as administrative procedures. These letters, all written in Peripheral Akkadian, are usually classified as the “vassal correspondence.”⁴¹ As they record the inner workings of the Egyptian administrative system, we may classify those 306 (or 307⁴²) documents as state letters for the purposes of the present volume.

The client kings addressed Pharaoh as the supreme authority (“The king, my lord, my god, my sun”) and recognized his representatives, the officials, as their superiors (“PN, my lord, my father”). They acknowledged Pharaoh's ruling power over their kingdoms and expected him to act accordingly, for example by providing solutions to their domestic problems and by mediating between client kings. The Amarna letters document that the relationship of dependency between Pharaoh and his vassals was established by a formal legal and religious act in form of an oath (Akkadian *māmītu*⁴³). But it is important to stress that the relationships between the Levantine kings and Pharaoh were far from uniform, and that there are various and varying degrees of dependency. This is an administrative system quite different in nature from, say, the relatively homogenous structure documented in the Neo-Assyrian Empire (cf. Radner, this volume).

3.1 *The Language of the State Letters*

The “vassal letters” were written in the cuneiform script and used a peculiar form of the Akkadian language that is today called “Peripheral Akkadian,”⁴⁴ in two main variants: Canaanite Akkadian, which is employed predominantly in the southern regions of Syro-Palestine, and Hurro-Akkadian, a variant significantly influenced by the non-Semitic Hurrian language and used predominantly in the northern parts of Syro-Palestine.

We may safely suppose that the Akkadian language, which was at the time spoken in its Assyrian and Babylonian dialects in northern and southern Mesopotamia but not in the Levant, was not the mother tongue for the scribes of these letters. Moreover, it is highly probable that Peripheral Akkadian served

purely as means of written communication and was generally not employed as a spoken language in the areas where it was used. The resulting form this language variety takes thus fluctuates greatly, depending both on the substrate language of the scribes and on their skills or level of practice.

3.2 *The Format of the State Letters*

If there is no homogenous language attested in the corpus of the state letters, the same is true with regard to the format of these letters. The skill and taste of the individual scribe in shaping the tablets would seem to play a significant role in how the end result looked (Fig. 1.6 and Fig. 1.7). Although there is a large variety of ratios between length and width of the resultant tablets, they all use the portrait format and most of them fit easily in the palm of a hand. Other than that, the specific size of the tablet would seem largely to depend on the extent of the message to be delivered (but see below for two-page letters). However, while in many cases the message fills both the obverse and reverse of the tablet, there are also many letters in which only a small part of the reverse was actually inscribed.⁴⁵

The Amarna letters are not sealed,⁴⁶ at least not on the preserved tablets. It is difficult to decide which, if any, means of safeguarding the messages recorded in the letters was employed, although the confidential nature of the correspondence would seem to make it desirable to do so. Was, for example, the practice of sealing letters within envelopes fashioned out of a thin layer of clay used, as

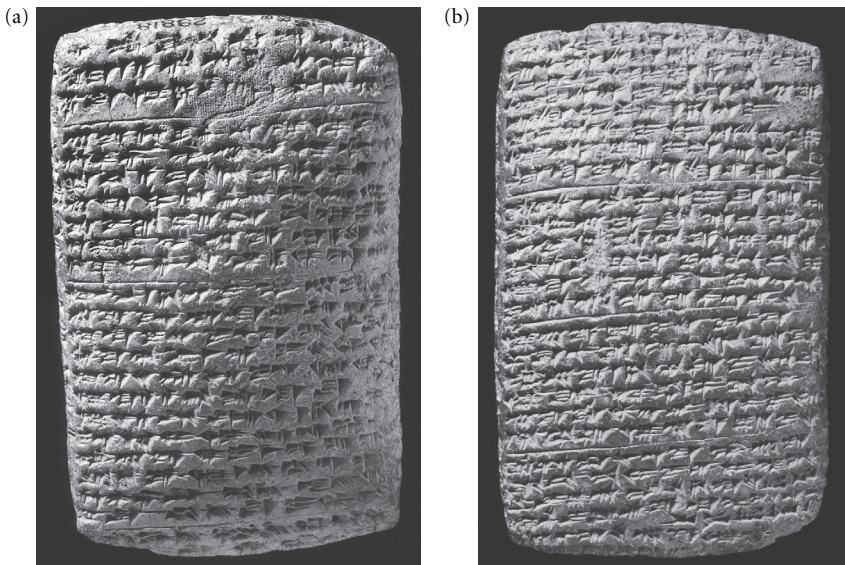


FIGURE 1.6. A clay tablet with a letter of Aziru of Amurru (EA 161) to Pharaoh, excavated at Akhetaten (Tell el-Amarna). British Museum, BME 29818. © Trustees of the British Museum.

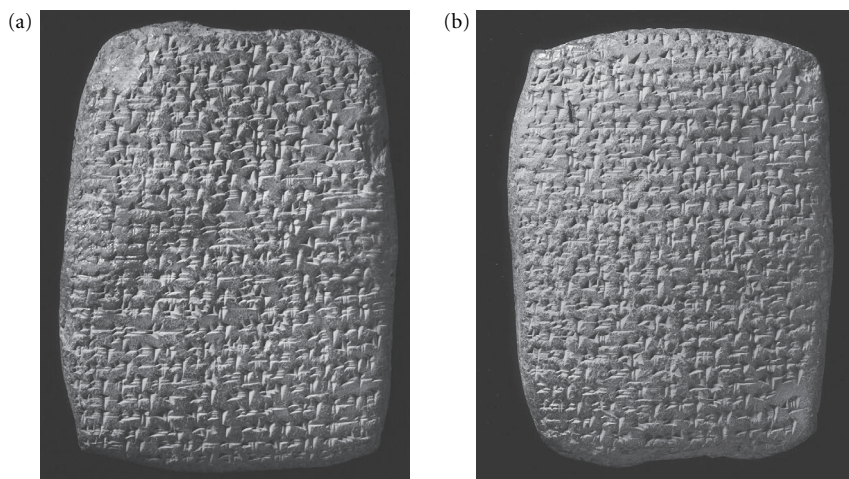


FIGURE 1.7. A clay tablet with a letter of Rib-Hadda of Byblos (EA 83) to Pharaoh, excavated at Akhetaten (Tell el-Amarna). British Museum, BME 29797. © Trustees of the British Museum.

attested for letters in contemporary Assyria⁴⁷? This assumption is certainly viable for the Levant, where the practice of securing messages within envelopes is already attested in the Middle Bronze period, as the discovery of a fragment of an inscribed envelope at Gezer highlights.⁴⁸ There is a possible indication that envelopes, or other containers, were used for the Amarna correspondence in the form of a group of documents (EA 101, EA 113, EA 245, EA 251) that probably represent the second part of two-page letters consisting of two tablets. These texts lack the essential opening passages which identify both the addressee and sender. It is very likely that they were carried together with their respective first tablet which would contain this information. But in what way the two parts of the letter were physically combined is not certain; a sealed container of some sort, for example a box or a bag (cf. Weeden, this volume), may be more likely than one clay envelope enclosing both tablets.

A very different form of safeguarding the message is attested for the international correspondence from Babylonia, Mittani, and Hatti, as well as for the letters from Nuhashe and Ugarit. According to the results of the petrological analysis of these tablets, they were all fired in kilns at a temperature of 700–800°C which ensured that no changes could be made to the letter—a good guarantee of the letter's authenticity,⁴⁹ although unlike an envelope this strategy does not protect the letter's confidentiality. This practice was also used for some state letters from the Levant, although not routinely: it is only attested for three letters from the Byblos correspondence,⁵⁰ one letter from Jerusalem,⁵¹ two letters from Ashkelon,⁵² and an unprovenanced letter which may have been sent from Gaza.⁵³

The rest of the state letters, as far as they have been analyzed, were unfired—or, like the letters written by correspondents in Egypt, fired at lower temperatures of c. 500° C.⁵⁴ What the purpose of such treatment may have been is difficult to say.

Since most of the Amarna letters come from undocumented contexts and also since the subsequent excavations failed to reveal pertinent information, we may never have physical evidence that would allow us to know for sure if some or all of the Amarna letters were sealed in envelopes or perhaps placed in sealed containers for delivery. On the other hand, we should consider the possibility that letters were written in duplicate, containing the very same message for archival and safeguarding purposes. This may explain the presence of some letters written by Pharaoh in the Amarna archives.⁵⁵

3.3 *The Introduction of the State Letters*

In both the international and the state correspondence, the structure of the letters is relatively standardized. Both groups use a basic structure consisting of two parts: the introduction, which is heavily standardized, followed by the body of the letter with the specific message. Only rarely is a postscript attached, addressed to the recipient's scribe (EA 286–289, EA 316; see section 4.1). The introduction used for the state letters is very distinct and in fact allows us to distinguish this corpus very neatly from the letters of the international correspondence, which use different formulae.⁵⁶

Depending on the recipient and the sender, the introduction formulae of the state letters take different forms. By far the most common is the introduction consisting of the address, immediately followed by the prostration formula. This formula is used exclusively for letters to Pharaoh and attested in almost 70 percent of all known Amarna letters.⁵⁷ Although there are variations, it is not possible to systematically distinguish the provenance of the letters on the basis of the introduction. A typical example sent by the king of Amurru reads:

To the king, my lord, my god, my sun. Message of Aziru, your servant.
I fall at the feet of my lord, seven times and seven times. (EA 156: 1–3)

There are 21 letters in which the client kings address Pharaoh's high-ranking officials, acting as intermediaries between them and the Egyptian king.⁵⁸ The introduction takes a simplified form of the one used for the king himself, always utilizing a less expansive prostration formula without “seven times and seven times,” showing therefore a somewhat lesser degree of respect while still recognizing the vastly superior social status of the addressee. Again, there is a degree of variation but no obvious correlation possible with the place of origin of the letters. A typical example, by the same sender as before, reads:

To Tutu, my lord, my father. Message of Aziru, your servant. I fall at the feet of my lord. (EA 164: 1–3)

The prostration formula, through which the client king persuasively expresses his self-abasement toward the superior addressee by falling at his feet, is a symptomatic element of the letters of the state correspondence, used in the messages addressed both to the Egyptian king and to his high-ranking officials. On the other hand, in letters between officials of equal rank (EA 98, EA 166) the prostration formula is not employed: it was clearly considered unnecessary in communications between “brothers” (as the recipient and sender of EA 166 are called explicitly).

Among the Amarna letters, there are seven messages addressed by the Egyptian king to his vassals.⁵⁹ As far as we can see from this admittedly limited body of evidence, the introduction formula usually consisted of two elements: the address, which identifies the recipient by name and title but never mentions the Pharaoh’s name, followed by a distinctive statement that has been identified as a direct translation of an Egyptian epistolary formula, best attested in the Late Ramesside letters from Western Thebes (dated to c. 1080 BC):⁶⁰

To Milki-ilu, the ruler of Gezer. Thus the king. He herewith dispatches to you this tablet, saying to you: . . . (EA 369: 1–4, similar in EA 99, 367, 370; abbreviated version in EA 162)

There is only one letter written by an Egyptian official to a client king. It is a message sent by the General to Rib-Hadda of Byblos and is introduced as follows:

Speak to Rib-Hadda, my son. Message of the General, your father. May (your personal) god show concern for you and your household. (EA 96: 1–6)

Whether the latter statement is a typical formula for this type of letters or a personal touch must remain unclear in the absence of comparable evidence.

In conclusion, the introduction formulae of the state letters represent a relatively homogenous system in which the relationship between the correspondents is the decisive factor for the choice of style. Moreover, the address usually takes the form in which the recipient, regardless of his respective status, is mentioned first and only then is the sender identified. While the use of the verb “to speak” in the imperative is clearly not obligatory, it is used very frequently, in over 50 per cent of the texts.⁶¹

4 SCRIBES AND MESSENGERS

Most letters are written from one ruler to another (or, if it is Pharaoh, one of his representatives). It is virtually certain that the sender did not write the actual letter, as the correspondence was conducted in cuneiform, a script employed in the Levant and in Egypt only by specially trained scribes. It is equally unlikely to assume that the rulers would have been able to dictate

the message in Peripheral Akkadian, a specialized language of writing again known only to trained experts.

We must therefore assume that the sender delivered his message to his scribe in his own language and that it was subsequently the responsibility of the scribe to compose and write the letter. We may also assume that the wording of certain parts of the letter, especially the introduction formulae, was left to the scribe, for whom knowing the identity of the addressee would have been sufficient to decide on the appropriate phrasing.

But just as the sender could not understand Peripheral Akkadian, neither could the recipient. Therefore the message must have been translated twice, first from the language of the sender to Peripheral Akkadian and then, once reaching its destination, from Peripheral Akkadian to the language of its addressee, for example from Canaanite into Peripheral Akkadian into Egyptian. Specialist scribes provided the necessary interface at both ends.

4.1 Scribes at the Egyptian Court

Who were the scribes writing the cuneiform letters at the Egyptian royal court? There is no doubt that these scribes were specifically trained in the cuneiform tradition, with a particular focus on letter-writing techniques. It is possible to demonstrate the close coexistence between Egyptian scribes and cuneiform specialists of the royal administration⁶² and it seems likely that, similar to the later situation of the scribes of the Ramesside corpus of cuneiform letters,⁶³ the Amarna cuneiform scribes were largely of Egyptian origin. None of them is, unfortunately, known to us by name.⁶⁴

A scribe receiving the cuneiform letters at the Egyptian royal court is mentioned in postscripts to four messages of Abdi-Heba of Jerusalem.⁶⁵ In each case, the scribe remains anonymous but is identified with his title “royal scribe” (Akkadian *ṭupšar šarri*, writing logographically as DUB.SAR LUGAL). Abdi-Heba addresses him as his superior, employing in three cases the typical prostration formula used when approaching high-ranking officials (see section 3.3). This is very obviously not a scribe in his own employ.

There are two possibilities for understanding this expression: either it simply describes the scribe’s function at the royal court, or it is meant to represent a specific Egyptian administrative title. There are indeed corresponding titles in Egyptian: “royal scribe” and “true royal scribe” (i.e. “royal secretary”). Both titles are well represented in the Amarna prosopography, and their respective holders, all with Egyptian names, are well-established members of the Egyptian government and administration.⁶⁶ There is little reason to assume that Abdi-Heba may have had a specific “(true) royal scribe” of Akhenaten in mind, but it is clear that he assumes that his letter would end up in the hands of such an official who would then address the king on his behalf. This royal scribe is beseeched to “present your eloquent words to the king, my lord” (EA 286–287, EA 289, similarly

EA 288), closely comparable in strategy and indeed wording to petitions to the Assyrian king in which the anonymous royal secretary is also addressed directly in a postscript to the message (Radner, this volume). None of Abdi-Heba's letters are routine communications, designed only to assure Pharaoh of his loyalty; instead, they concern very serious matters of rebellion and suspected treason. Abdi-Heba clearly is in dire need of an advocate on his behalf. Moreover, the reference to the scribe's eloquence must be understood in the context that it was he who turned the letter, which reached him in Peripheral Akkadian, into a message in Egyptian that would be presented to Pharaoh.

Another postscript to a royal scribe at the Egyptian court, but of a different nature, is attested in a letter of Pu-Ba'alu of Yurša, concluding a letter to Pharaoh that consists of very polite protestations of the vassal king's obedience to the king and his local governor. The postscript, on the other hand, has a very specific message and is worth quoting in full:

To the secretary (*ša-ah-ši-ha-ši-ha*⁶⁷) of [my lord]: Message of Pu-Ba'alu.
I fall at your feet. There was nothing in my house when I entered it and so I have not sent a caravan to you. I am now preparing a fine caravan for you (EA 316: 16–25).

Here, the postscript emerges as the central message of the letter. "When I entered my house" is a reference to Pu-Ba'alu's ascension to the throne of Yurša.⁶⁸ The royal secretary scribe is approached as a high authority, addressed again in the usual way reserved for high-ranking Egyptian officials, who can expect to receive rich gifts from the vassal ruler, presumably so that his eloquence will be guaranteed whenever needed in the future. It is clear that Pu-Ba'alu assumes that the same official will continue dealing with his letters. Perhaps there is indeed one specific scribe charged with receiving the cuneiform correspondence on the king's behalf. Alternatively, this may reflect the situation at the vassal's own court, where there may have been just one such expert at hand.

As we have already discussed in section 2, the Records Office at Akhetaten served as the place where incoming tablets were registered, processed, and eventually stored. It also emerges as the place where Pharaoh's cuneiform scribes worked, inscribing his messages on clay tablets. The results of the mineralogical, micropalaeontological, and chemical analyses, among them petrography and Neutron Activation Analysis, carried out by a team headed by Yuval Goren on the Amarna documents held in Berlin, London, Oxford, and Paris have shown that two different types of clay were used by the scribes working at Akhetaten.⁶⁹ A common Nile silt clay was employed for the school texts as well as one letter written locally to Pharaoh (EA 339, see below, section 4.4). On the other hand, all other letters produced by the royal scriptorium, the official correspondence of the king and his court, were written on tablets made of very fine marl clay of the Esna formation, which is not attested in the immediate

vicinity of the city of Akhetaten and had to be transported there from some distance.

4.2 Scribes at the Vassal Rulers' Courts

Now turning to the scribes employed in Syro-Palestine, we have already stated that the language of the individual scribes differed extensively, depending primarily on their substrate language and skills. On the other hand, our analysis of the introductions of the vassals' letters (section 3.3) has made it obvious that there was a set of formal rules of etiquette shared by all scribes. They were very well aware of the fact that these had to be followed in order to ensure the effectiveness of the communication. We may therefore suppose that these scribes were professionals who had undergone dedicated training.

Very probably they were not lowly employees of a scriptorium, but court officials of distinguished rank, members of the uppermost levels of the local administration and, moreover, given the often sensitive or confidential nature of the messages, individuals considered highly trustworthy by their sovereigns, as whose personal secretaries they were acting. Such an assumption is confirmed by the already discussed postscripts from the letters of Abdi-Heba and Pu-Ba'alu, who clearly conceive of the scribes at the Egyptian court as very powerful, high-status individuals.

The abovementioned clay analyses conducted by Goren's team allowed some new insights into the letter-writing practices of the Levantine rulers. First, the analysis of the tablets' clay allows the identification of groups of texts for which the same type of clay was used; second, the regional provenance of these clays can be established. The tablets bearing messages of rulers from securely identified sites, such as Byblos, Tyre, Hazor, Megiddo, Shechem, Jerusalem, and Gath, have been shown to have clay composition that is in agreement with the local geological environment; in most cases, the letters' clay corresponded to the material used for pottery production at these sites.⁷⁰

4.3 Scribes at the Egyptian Government Centers at Gaza and Beth-Shean

However, the results of Goren's clay analyses clearly indicate that the residence of a certain ruler need not necessarily correspond to the place where his letter was actually written. There are two groups of letters made from clay that does not match the point of origin of the message. One group includes letters from Gezer and Beirut as well as those of some rulers whose seat is unknown to us, and their clay stems from the southern coastal plains of the Levant. The other group includes letters from Jerusalem, Shamhuna (Shimon in the northwestern Jezreel Valley), and Acco, with their clay originating from the central Jordan Valley.⁷¹

What are the implications of this? For once, it makes it virtually certain that not every client king had his own local scribe at his disposal to compose

cuneiform letters on his behalf. When interpreting these results, Goren and his co-authors, archaeologist Israel Finkelstein and philologist and historian Nadav Na'aman, have convincingly argued that these findings indicate that the letters were written in local centers of the Egyptian administration system in Canaan, which can be identified with Gaza and Beth-Shean, respectively.⁷² The scribes who wrote the letters worked at these places, rather than at the seats of the local rulers, and were employed by the Egyptian administration.

But who told them what to write? There are two main scenarios. The Canaanite rulers themselves may have had to appear periodically before the Egyptian government officials at Gaza or Beth-Shean and could have letters to the royal Egyptian court written and dispatched on those occasions.⁷³ Alternatively, the local rulers may have sent a messenger with an oral communication to the regional Egyptian administrative centers at Gaza and Beth-Shean who delivered his message orally to a scribe who put it into writing. That the messenger could travel independently to the Egyptian government center, in this case Gaza according to Goren's analyses, while his master remained at his home city, is demonstrated by a letter of the otherwise unattested client king Kurtuya of Zunu to Pharaoh, whom he assures of his absolute loyalty before asking Pharaoh to dispatch his representative to help him in securing his position:

[Ve]rily I am guarding the [cit]y of the king, my master, my Su[n], until the arrival of the magnate of the king, my master, my Sun; and may the king, my master, the Sun from the skies, know that the city of the king, my master, my Sun, in which I am, was raided and my father was struck down. (EA 220: 15–24)

Dispatching a messenger to the Egyptian administrative center with instructions to have a letter written and posted would seem an appropriate strategy especially in urgent situations, such as the one attested here, which finds Kurtuya's city under attack and himself struggling to establish control after his father and predecessor's unexpected death.

The clay analysis indicates that the tablet was written in Gaza, but interestingly, the linguistic analysis of the text suggests that its scribe was of northern origin.⁷⁴ Could this mean that the messenger who delivered Kurtuya's message was also the scribe who wrote the actual letter in Gaza? Our interpretation is somewhat hampered by the fact that we do not know whether the city of Zunu was located in northern Canaan. It is more sensible, for the time being, to simply assume that the Egyptian administrative centers recruited their cuneiform scribes not necessarily from their immediate geographical vicinity.

4.4 *Messengers*

From the previous discussion, it has emerged that a significant part of the communication between the Levantine kings and the Egyptian administration was

carried out in oral form. In addition to dealings with the local government centers, we may suppose that this holds true also for communicating with the Egyptian king and his highest officials.

After Pharaoh had a letter written, it was usually handed over to a messenger who was responsible and indeed accountable for its safe delivery from the sender to its intended recipient. Pharaoh's messengers are mentioned in letters from Tyre (EA 147), Hazor (EA 227), Qatna (EA 56), and Amurru (EA 160). While letters of the international correspondence occasionally mention messengers to be accompanied by an interpreter (Akkadian *targumannu*),⁷⁵ such professionals are not attested in the state letters. Apparently they were unnecessary in the interactions between Canaanites and Egyptians.

The general Akkadian term used for the messengers in the Amarna letters, *mār šipri*, could correspond to specific Egyptian titles such as "royal envoy to all foreign lands"⁷⁶ but other officials as well are attested in the role of messengers, such as members of the Egyptian military stationed in the Levant. This is most explicitly illustrated by Pharaoh's letter to Endaruta, the ruler of Akšap:

The king herewith sends to you Hanni, the son of Maireya, the stable overseer of the king in Canaan. And what he tells you heed very carefully lest the king find fault in you. Every word that he tells you heed very carefully and carry out carefully. (EA 367: 6–13)

Hanni, who is returning to his Levantine posting after a visit to the royal court, is said to deliver the king's orders, which presumably go beyond the general instructions to prepare for the imminent arrival of the king and his troops communicated in the letter.

References to messengers (all remaining anonymous) in the service of Levantine rulers, in contrast, are limited to some kings from the northern Levant, corresponding neatly to the regions where clay analyses prove that letters were also written locally (see section 4.2). The king of Ugarit dispatched his own messengers to Pharaoh (EA 45, EA 47), as did the kings of Byblos (EA 126, EA 137) and Amurru (EA 160). The city of Tunip, a neighbor and rival of Amurru, also communicated with Pharaoh by messenger, or at least had repeatedly attempted to do so, according to a unique letter sent by the "citizens of Tunip":

And now, for twenty years, we have gone on writing to the king, our lord, the king of Egypt, but our messengers have stayed on with the king, our lord.... We have gone on writing to the king, our lord, the king of Egypt, for twenty years, and not a single word of our lord has reached us. (EA 59: 13–14, 43–46)

They were not the only ones who were left waiting for a reply from Pharaoh or indeed their messengers. Rib-Hadda of Byblos laments in one letter to the king of Egypt (EA 126) that his messenger was being detained by Pharaoh and in

another, written after his eventual return, that Pharaoh had sent him back without the auxiliary troops that Rib-Hadda had asked for (EA 137). From another letter of Rib-Hadda we learn that his messenger had traveled to Egypt with two horses, accompanied by a servant:

I sent a man of mine to my master, and both his horses were taken. A second man—a man of his (i.e., of the messenger)—was taken, [and] the king's tablet was not put [in] the hands of my man. (EA 83: 10–14; Fig. 1.7)

Therefore, at least some messengers of the Levantine kings employed horses for their transportation, although the distance they had to cover in order to reach Akhetaten is so great that we can probably assume this to be the norm.

A privileged communication system for messengers and their letters like the one attested in the Neo-Assyrian Empire (Radner, this volume) is not documented; the preference for one responsible messenger would seem to exclude the concept of a relay post service like the one introduced by the Assyrians in the first millennium BC. However, the Egyptian administrative centers in Gaza and Beth-Shean may well have served as interchange stations where messages and/or tablets from the Levantine rulers were gathered and those from Pharaoh were distributed.

On certain occasions, the Levantine rulers traveled to the Egyptian court. There they were able to receive messages addressed to them⁷⁷ and also to write letters to Pharaoh, as is clearly demonstrated by the fragmentary text EA 339, whose clay composition shows that it was written locally at Amarna.⁷⁸

IN CONCLUSION

The epistolary material surviving from the Amarna period that can be described as state correspondence is extremely uneven. On one hand, there is just one letter from one of the Egyptian magnates addressed to the king, a papyrus document composed in the Egyptian language and the Hieratic script. On the other hand, there are almost 300 letters from the correspondence with the client rulers in the Levant, clay tablets inscribed in Peripheral Akkadian and the cuneiform script.

Certain elements in the way Pharaoh is addressed can be compared, attesting to commonly held conventions in letter-writing etiquette: the lengthy letter introduction with royal titulary and rich epithets, the invocation of divine intervention in favor of the royal addressee, and the general politeness of the sender. But there are also key differences. Hence, the Egyptian letter is dated while the clay tablets are generally without date. However, at least some of the letters receive a Hieratic label giving the date once they are processed by the Egyptian bureaucracy at Amarna, indicating that this was thought to be important and relevant information.⁷⁹

Yuval Goren's clay analyses of Amarna tablets have demonstrated that a special material of superior quality was used for the letters of the king of Egypt while other documents, including school texts and one non-royal letter, were written on tablets made out of the local clay. This material distinction between official and non-official for the cuneiform evidence can be compared to Hieratic writing practice, where papyrus is used for official or formal communication whereas ostraca (pottery sherds), a cheap material of obviously inferior quality, serves for private or non-official writing.

The methods of communication as attested in the Amarna state letters fit well into the overall Egyptian administrative tradition by combining the use of both oral and written messages, with the messengers playing the central role. On the other hand, the physical object of the letter, a tablet sent by the king of Egypt himself, was considered by the Levantine rulers an exceptional and much desired object,⁸⁰ regardless of its content: its possession alone was a powerful signal of the privileged status of the recipient.

State Correspondence in the Hittite World

Mark Weeden

THIS chapter describes and discusses the evidence¹ for the internal correspondence of the Hittite state during its so-called imperial period (c. 1450–1200 BC). After a brief sketch of the geographical and historical background, we will survey the available corpus and the generally well-documented archaeological contexts—a rarity among the corpora discussed in this volume. In the third part of the chapter, we will turn to the organization of long-distance state communication, focusing in turn on the correspondents, their letters, the messengers, and the animals and routes used. In the conclusion, we will briefly address what the state correspondence tells us about the nature of the Hittite state.

1 THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The people known to us as the Hittites operated from a power base high on the Anatolian Plateau from c. 1650 to 1200 BC. Discovered in the mid-19th century by European travellers, their main capital city at Hattusa (modern Boğazköy, also Boğazkale) was first identified as such through Akkadian language documents found in German-Turkish excavations beginning in 1906. In the meantime, clay tablets bearing cuneiform inscriptions in a then unidentified Indo-European language had been found in the archive of Tell el-Amarna in Egypt (see Mynářová, this volume). This language was quickly identified with that used in the bulk of the tablets found at Hattusa and in 1916 officially deciphered as Hittite, the oldest attested Indo-European language, by the Czech scholar Bedřich Hrozný. At Hattusa, German excavations continue until this day, and sizeable archives belonging to the temple and palace administration in Hattusa have been unearthed there.

The term “Hittite” is applied to the civilization of ancient Hattusa by virtue of references made to “Hittites” in the Bible, which had themselves been associated with findings in northern Syria of monumental stone inscriptions in a hieroglyphic script, until recently called “Hittite Hieroglyphs.” This term was discarded in the 1970s after the inscriptions, which date to the Iron Age, were finally demonstrated to be written in Luwian, an Anatolian language closely related to Hittite.

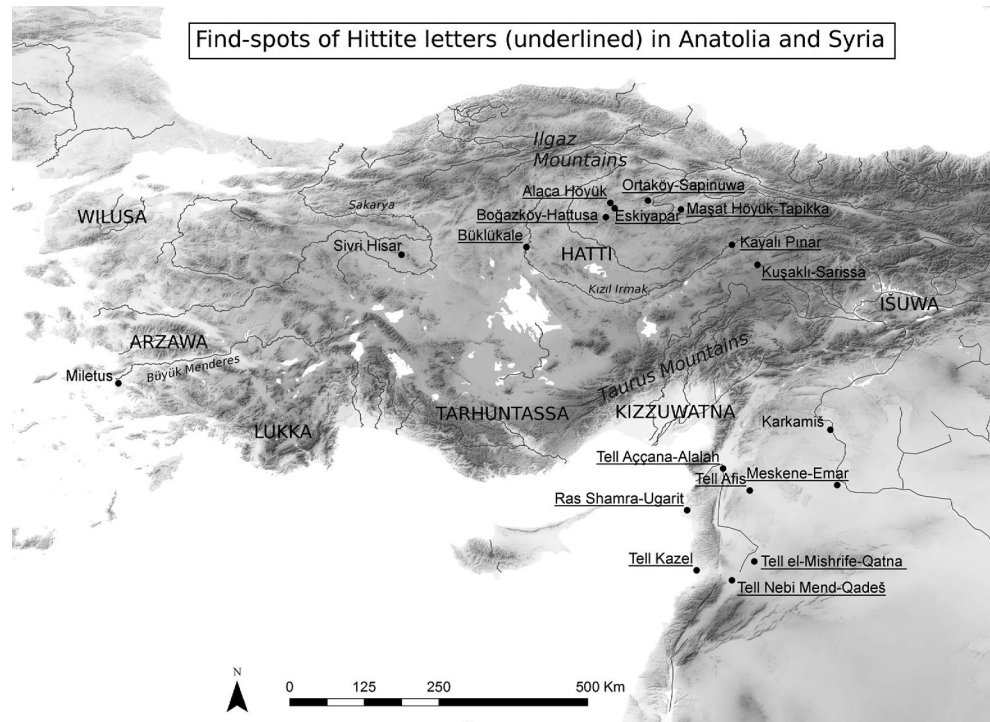


FIGURE 2.1. Topographical map with the places mentioned, including find spots of state letters. Map by Alessio Palmisano, after a sketch by the author.

1.1 *Places and Terrain*

Hittite cities typically nestle into the landscape (fig. 2.1), often at the foot of a mountain,² and the capital Hattusa is built into extremely mountainous terrain, with its architecture adapted to and formed around the rocky environment.³ The city lies almost directly in the center of the loop formed by the modern Kızıl Irmak river (Classical Halys, Hittite Marassantiya), which is often assumed to demarcate the Hittite “heartland,” although this may not necessarily correspond to the historical realities.

The Anatolian Plateau covers almost all of central Anatolia at a consistent altitude of c. 500–1,000 meters, on top of which the landscape is additionally raised and interrupted by numerous mountain ranges. Today, this area is covered by snow over the long months of winter and travel can be difficult. More extensive movements of troops or goods over long distances would have been virtually impossible during winter, even if the climate was slightly warmer than it is today. Occasionally we read that the king has passed the winter in quarters outside of Hattusa,⁴ whether that be due to difficulty of movement or other factors. Hittite correspondence mentions the problems that snow or ice posed for communication, although surprisingly rarely.⁵

Routes to and from Hattusa are much constricted by the landscape. Due north of Hattusa, Hittite settlement seems to end at the Ilgaz Dağları mountain range.⁶ To the northeast, only a few routes lead out of the central Hittite area via Sapinuwa (modern Ortaköy), itself capital during part of the reign of Tudhaliya III (see section 1.2), and onward to the region of Amasya and Merzifon, an area the Hittites continually contested with the Kaska peoples. The most important city there was Nerik (probably modern Oymaağaç), which was lost to Hittite rule over long periods. Southeast of Ortaköy lies Tapikka (modern Maşathöyük), which also guards an important pass through the mountains. On reaching the lower eastern bend of the Halys river there is Kayalı Pınar (probably ancient Samuha), which served as another temporary capital during Tudhaliya III’s turbulent reign. Further to the southeast stands the outpost of Sarissa (modern Kuşaklı) before a long ridge of hills, which centuries later, in the Neo-Assyrian period, was fortified with a wall and served as a border.⁷

Travelling directly south from Hattusa, after crossing the Kızıl Irmak into Cappadocia one is funneled southeast by the Melendiz mountains before reaching the Cilician Gates, one of the only viable crossings into the Amuq plain and northern Syria, for the Hittites the gateway to the Middle East. At the height of their power they controlled regions as far south as Damascus, where they came into contact and conflict with New Kingdom Egypt and eventually established peace agreements. If, after crossing the Kızıl Irmak, one travels southwest, the route leads between the Salt Lake and the Melendiz mountains down into the Konya plain, the Hittite “Lower Land.” Beyond Konya to the southwest lies the severe

mountainous terrain of classical Pisidia and Lycia, largely identical with what the Hittites called the Lukka Lands.⁸ En route to Konya, the south is blocked off by the Taurus mountains. On the other side of these lies Rough Cilicia, part of the land of Tarhuntassa (see section 1.2), which extended as far to the west as Perge on the Cayster river.

Heading west from Hattusa and crossing the Kızıl Irmak at Büklükale, one runs into the escarpment of the Haymana plateau, which has to be circumnavigated before traversing the dry Upper Sakarya plain. After crossing the Sakarya river (Classical Sangarios, Hittite *Sehiriya*), one makes one's way up to Sivri Hisar: this may be ancient Sallapa, the rallying point for Hittite campaigns in the west.⁹ Around here, where the Anatolian plateau finishes, seems to be where the Hittites conceived of the end of the "Lands of Hatti," at least during the reign of Mursili II, probably with a border running along the Porsuk or Seydi Çay and the Akar Çay.¹⁰ The west itself, most easily reached by following the Maeander valley down toward the Bodrum peninsula and Miletus, is an area known to the Hittites as the Arzawa Lands, which they found politically extremely important, but where remains of specifically Hittite material culture have not been found in any great quantities.¹¹ Here they came into contact with transmarine civilizations, particularly the Mycenaean, who had many outposts in western Anatolia.¹² These are almost certainly the people attested in numerous Hittite texts as the *Ahhiyawa*, most likely Homer's Achaeans.¹³ Numerous documents from Hattusa attest to a turbulent relationship of the Hittites with their western neighbors, from the Lukka lands in the southwest through the Arzawa Lands to the land of Wilusa, thought by most scholars to be located in the northwest.¹⁴

1.2 Historical Overview

Geography profoundly influenced Hittite history and the nature of the Hittite state, shaped by the progressively more successful, although ultimately failed, strategies of the Hittite ruling class for dealing with their environment. Modern historians distinguish an older period (c. 1650–1450 BC) from the so-called Empire period, which is itself divided into an earlier (c. 1450–1350 BC) and a later Empire period (c. 1350–1200 BC).¹⁵

Early Hittite attempts at expansion into Syria, culminating in an expedition that sacked the city of Babylon in Mesopotamia in 1595 BC, were always thwarted by Hittite inability to preserve cohesion at home once they had undertaken the crossing of the Taurus mountains. Starting with the reign of Tudhaliya II in the mid-15th century, more intensive campaigning in western Anatolia became usual as well as further incursions into Syria, to which time initial contact with Egypt seems to date. The late 15th and early 14th centuries were a time of great turmoil. Tudhaliya II's successor Arnuwanda I experienced significant problems with western Anatolia, and during the reign of his son Tudhaliya III the kingdom was thrown into a crisis when enemies from all compass directions—Arzawans

from the west, Kaskans from the north, Išuwans from the southeast—invaded the central Hittite area (therefore called the “concentric invasions”). The Kaskans even burned Hattusa. Tudhaliya responded to the crisis by shifting his capital first to Sapinuwa and then to Samuha, eventually reuniting the country and pacifying the west.

It was the reign of his son and successor Suppiluliuma I which put a stop to this cycle of expansion and contraction. This king established a vice-regency at the north Syrian town of Karkamiš, which was ruled by a dynasty of his descendants even after the fall of the central Hittite authority around 1200 BC. From Karkamiš the Hittites could keep an eye on Syria and ensure loyalty to Hattusa by force if necessary, but frequently also by mediation and diplomacy. Whether the nature of the Hittite state during its so-called imperial phase is appropriately described by the term “Empire” is debated. Some scholars, arguing on the basis of material remains (including pottery distribution, settlement patterns, and landscape monuments), prefer to describe Hittite hegemony over the conquered regions in terms of a “network” of power.¹⁶ There is no doubt that the Hittite strategy of binding local rulers with treaty agreements into their system had to be militarily enforced periodically in order to remain effective. The presence of large fortified installations, such as at Alalah (Level III) at the head of the Orontes river on the Amuq plain,¹⁷ testifies to the provision of a strategic military capability that could implement this swiftly if necessary.

Suppiluliuma’s son Mursili II occupied himself a great deal with western Anatolia. The Arzawa lands were under his authority, split up into four kingdoms with separate vassal treaties imposed on each of the local kings. Mass transplantations of western populations had so much effect on Hattusa that they may have contributed to the dying out of the Hittite language and its replacement by Luwian.¹⁸ Mursili’s son Muwatalli II, for unknown reasons, moved the capital once again, to Tarhuntassa in the southwest. His son Urhi-Teššub moved it back to Hattusa before he was forcibly removed and replaced by his uncle, Hattusili III. Tarhuntassa remained a separate kingdom bound by treaty to Hattusa, although preserved successive versions of treaties between the two show a weakening of Hattusa against its neighbor.

There had been tensions with Egypt since the campaigns of Suppiluliuma I in northern Syria. These culminated in the momentous battle of Qadeš in the early 13th century, where the forces of Muwatalli II and Ramses II of Egypt faced each other in a conflict concerning the allegiance of the Syrian state of Amurru (cf. Mynářová, this volume), resulting in a peace treaty between Ramses and Muwatalli’s successor Hattusili III. Some thirty to forty years after the death of this monarch—after further turmoil in the west, a possible civil war with Tarhuntassa, an internal famine, and the phenomenon known to modern historians as the invasions of the Sea Peoples disrupted Syria and the south Anatolian coast—the Hittite state based at Hattusa disappeared from history.

2 THE HITTITE STATE LETTERS

There has been no recent attempt to compile a complete corpus of Hittite state letters. After some scattered publications of hand-copies, particularly from the international correspondence, the letters in Hittite language from Hattusa were published in hand-copy by Güterbock (1971) and the Akkadian letters by Kümmel (1985). Hagenbuchner (1989b; in German) published editions of 424 Hittite letters, both in Akkadian and in Hittite and covering various genres, including internal and international state correspondence.¹⁹ Since then, the excavation of the provincial center of Tapikka (modern Maşathöyük) has brought to light 97 Hittite language letters from the reign of Tudhaliya III, the majority of the 118 documents excavated there (Alp 1992). Scale photographs of almost all Hittite letters, excluding those from Maşathöyük, are now available online (www.hethiter.net).

In recent years, selections of relevant Hittite letters have been collected in two books: Hoffner (2009) presents 126 letters of the internal and the international correspondence, either wholly or in part, in transliteration, English translation, and commentary, whereas Marizza (2009) presents Italian translations and commentary for 111 letters, mostly from the internal correspondence. But there is far more material than that, especially from the pre-Empire period. For starters, around 500 letters from the time of Tudhaliya III, including state internal and international correspondence,²⁰ were excavated in the temporary residence city of Sapinuwa (modern Ortaköy), but they still mostly await publication.

2.1 *The Chronological Extent of the Available Letters*

The early history of the Hittite use of cuneiform writing is still subject to much debate. The earliest letter by a Hittite king presently known is the unprovenanced letter of king Hattusili I to king Tunip-Teššub of Tigunatum, a piece of international correspondence from the late 17th century BC written in the Akkadian language.²¹ It is written in a ductus and with sign-forms matching most closely other documents from the palace at Tigunatum, but it also bears a strong resemblance to an Akkadian-language tablet found at Hattusa,²² which contains a literary narrative about the siege of the city of Uršu in north Syria, from a campaign presumably related to the war planned by Hattusili and Tunip-Teššub, according to the letter. It appears that the Hittite king was in fact using a scribe from Tigunatum for these documents,²³ and moreover, X-ray fluorescence analysis of the clay of the Uršu tablet has shown conclusively that it is not made of Hattusa clay.²⁴ This is significant because no other letters from the Old Kingdom have thus far come to light. The latest, although not universally accepted, view of the early stages of Hittite cuneiform (based primarily on archival arguments) is that it was initially used to write Akkadian, as in most of the contemporary Middle East, and that the Hittites did not begin to use it for writing their own language

until early in the 15th century,²⁵ slightly antedating the beginning of the so-called imperial period.

It is from the phase of the imperial period that Hittite-language letters relating to state correspondence are known. No letters can be securely dated to the reign of Tudhaliya II (mid-15th century BC),²⁶ but at least one is known from that of his successor, Arnuwanda I.²⁷ A great many of our letters date to the reign of the next king, Tudhaliya III, a time of turmoil and disruption. The high number of letters may well reflect the special circumstances of this period, during which numerous Hittite cities, including Hattusa, were burned by foreign invaders. This preserved the clay tablets. It contributed to the preservation of the letter archive at Maşathöyük and presumably that of Ortaköy. However, Tudhaliya's letters preserved from Hattusa do not appear to come from a similarly closed archival context. From Suppiluliuma I onwards, during the later imperial period, there are letters available for the reigns of all Hittite kings. However, it is only rarely that the fragmentary state of preservation allows us to identify the specific ruler.

2.2 *Compiling the Corpus*

At the Hittite capital of Hattusa alone, some 30,000 clay tablets and fragments with cuneiform writing have been found. Data on find-spots, rough date of inscription (old, middle, or new Hittite), and recent bibliography for every single excavated fragment, along with links to photos and hand-copies, can be found in the online Hittite text concordance (*Konkordanz der hethitischen Texte*: www.hethiter.net/konkordanz) maintained by S. Koşak, which provides the discipline's fundamental research tool. The basic genre classification of the tablets according to content is still rooted in the Hittite text catalogue (*Catalogue des Textes Hittites* = CTH) by E. Laroche, now maintained and updated online (www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/CTH). The numbers of letters according to the CTH groupings are given in Table 2.1.

Problematic for our purposes is that some of the CTH numbers are filed within deceptively named larger groups: for example, CTH 190, listed under "Royal Letters," contains 110 "Letters of Dignitaries" ("Briefe der Würdenträger")²⁸; some of these are letters exchanged between the royal family and officials, others between officials. It is therefore necessary to look

Table 2.1. Hittite letters after Koşak's Konkordanz

	Total
Egypto-Hittite (CTH 151–170)	96
Royal Letters (CTH 171–190)	330
Various Letters (CTH 191–210)	285
Total	711

Table 2.2. Hittite state correspondence from Hattusa

	Hattusa
Royal Couple	4
King to Officials	8
Queen to Officials	1
Officials to King	49
Officials to Queen	12
King to Vassals	10
Vassals to King	14
Vassals to Queen	4
Officials to Officials	31
Unknown	110

through all these categories and most expedient for the present discussion to divide them according to the status of sender and recipient, excluding the international correspondence with other royal houses. The letters from Hattusa can be categorized according to the status of the correspondents as shown in Table 2.2.

2.3 Find-spots and Archival Contexts in Hattusa and Elsewhere

Generally speaking, the vast majority of Hittite tablets belong to one archaeological stratum: the very last one from the period just before the city in question was destroyed or abandoned. At Maşathöyük, ancient Tapikka, the find of 97 mostly well-preserved letters in two rooms of an administrative building and its portico, where they had clearly fallen from an upper story, was made possible by the fact that the building had been destroyed by fire.²⁹ The letters belong to an archive covering just a few years at the most, according to the view adopted here, with 45 letters written from the king to officials, six letters written from officials to the king, and 30 letters written between officials.³⁰ One would have to assume a similar circumstance to account for the preservation of the apparently large cache of c. 500 letters awaiting publication from Ortaköy, ancient Sapinuwa. As we have discussed (section 2.1), all these texts belong to the time of political chaos under Tudhaliya III.

At Hattusa, the situation is different. Some letters appear to have been left behind in temples of the Upper City when these buildings were abandoned:³¹ these letters³² have a Middle Hittite palaeography, dating between the late 15th and early 14th centuries BC. But most of the tablets from Hattusa, whether older or later, were stored in just a few archives: in the palace on the citadel mound of Büyükkale, in Temple I with its surrounding magazines in the Lower City, and in a nearby administrative building called “House on the Slope” (“Haus am Hang”)

by the excavators. However, as the city seems to have been gradually abandoned some time before it was eventually put to the torch, the state of the archives, as they are known to us today, may only be a reflection of how they were left after Hattusa's evacuation.³³ Also, the continued inhabitation of the site during the Iron Age clearly had an effect on the distribution of the fragments, as they appear to have been dug up, moved around and used as fill for new buildings. Table 2.3 presents the distribution of letters from the state correspondence of Hattusa according to their find contexts.³⁴

Previous studies have not attempted to show the distribution of the letters according to their find-spots at Hattusa, perhaps because such an exercise is not particularly rewarding, as one can see from Table 2.3. There is no significant proportional weighting in the distribution of any of the sender and addressee groups of the state correspondence according to find-spot, nor can a significant weighting be found for foreign-language documents. The seemingly large number of 32 letters found in Building A of Büyükkale, for example, is merely a reflection of the fact that great numbers of tablets were found here: currently 2,694 tablets and fragments, compared to just 400 found in Building K of Büyükkale, for example.³⁵

What is clear to all commentators, on the other hand, is that most of the correspondence, if it was kept at all, was kept in the palace ensemble of the

Table 2.3. Distribution of letters from the state correspondence according to their find-spot in Hattusa, totalling 232. Bk = Büyükkale (without specific find-spot); A, B, C, D, E, F, K, M = buildings on Büyükkale; p-q/(10–11) = a quadrant on Büyükkale; By = Büyükkaya; HaH = Haus am Hang (House on the Slope); O = Oberstadt (Upper City); T.I = Temple I; U = Unterstadt (Lower City); un = unrecorded find-spot.

Hattusa	A	B	C	D	p-q	E	F	K	M	Bk	By	T.I	HaH	O	U	un
Royal Couple					2											2
King to Officials ¹	1			1						1			1	1 ²		3
Queen to Officials																1
Officials to King	7		1	8	17	2				1		3		1 ³		6
Officials to Queen		2		3	4	1					1					1
King to Vassals	1			1			1			1		3				3
Vassals to King	6		1	2	1					1						2
Vassals to Queen	3				1											
Officials to Officials	4	1	1	4	6	2	1			1 ⁴		2		1		5
Unclassified	10			8	39	3	1	2	4	1	2	10	6	3	3	15

¹ Including members of the royal family.

² KBo 32.200 (Temple VIII).

³ KBo 32.202 (Temple VIII).

⁴ Letter of the king of Išuwa to the "Chief of the charioteers" (Building F on Büyükkale).

royal citadel of Büyükkale.³⁶ There, the most plentiful find-spot for letters is Quadrant p-q/10-11 (excavated in 1964), where c. 70 letter fragments were found in a secondary context close to Building D, together with fragments of other types of documents, including ten omen reports. The letters, as far as their date can be ascertained, span a period of over a century.³⁷ These mostly tiny fragments would appear to have been deliberately smashed in antiquity, possibly already during the Hittite period.³⁸ Their find context is therefore best described as a dump.³⁹ Close to this dump, the second largest collection of 27 letter fragments was found in association with building D, but although a connection between the two contexts is possible this remains speculative.⁴⁰ In any case, one cannot simply assume that all these letters were originally kept together rather than that they found their way into one another's vicinity as a result of a periodic weeding of the archives, for example.⁴¹ With this in mind, we should mention the case of a letter from an official to the king which specifically stipulates that the tablet be kept safe so that it can be referred to in any forthcoming dispute.⁴²

Let this tablet be saved, so that when I . . . Your Majesty, my lord, they may interrogate me in this (matter) on the basis of (lit. from) this tablet.
(KUB 40.1 rev.¹ 29-31, translation after Hoffner 2009: 361-362)

This request implies that the sender was well aware that the letter was not likely to be kept unless he explicitly asked for it to be. Indeed, judging from the topics treated in the known letters, we would expect many thousands of them to have been written each year. What is preserved is clearly only a tiny fraction of the original output. Hittite scribes made multiple copies of documents that they wanted to keep in the archives,⁴³ but letters clearly did not belong to that category.⁴⁴ A small number of letters was written on multi-columned tablets, contrary to the usual practice of using small single-columned tablets for letters,⁴⁵ and these may well have been drafts or archive copies of letters sent. That any of the letters ended up in any archival context at all is surely the exception that needs explanation rather than evidence for a pattern of archival practice.

Beyond the heartland (fig. 2.1), examples of Hittite state letters⁴⁶ have been found in Anatolia: at Alacahöyük (one Hittite letter fragment), Eskiypar (one Middle Hittite letter fragment), Büklükale (one Middle Hittite letter fragment), Kayalı Pınar, perhaps ancient Samuha (one Middle Hittite letter) and Kuşaklı, ancient Sarissa (two Middle Hittite letters); and in Syria⁴⁷ at Tell Afis (two Hittite letters), Tell Atchana, ancient Alalakh (two Hittite letter fragments), Tell Kazel (Akkadian letter of a "king" to an official), Tell Meskene, ancient Emar (two Hittite letters) and Tell Mishrife, ancient Qatna (five Akkadian letters, including one from a Hittite vassal and a Hittite general to the local king).

3 THE ORGANIZATION OF THE INTERNAL STATE COMMUNICATION

The following analysis concentrates on the evidence of the state letters from Anatolia. We will first discuss the physical nature of the letters before we turn to the correspondents and the subjects of their letters and to the messengers employed to deliver them, as well as the animals, passports, and roads used by these messengers.

3.1 *Letter Formats and Matters of Script and Language*

There is no standard format for Hittite letters in the form of clay tablets, although they frequently have a square or rectangular shape, measuring c. 5–8 cm on the horizontal axis to c. 4–11 cm on the vertical. The tablets can be inscribed in portrait or landscape format (fig. 2.2 and 2.3).⁴⁸ Compositions said to be letters that do not have this typical shape, such as multi-columned tablets, usually belong to other genres or are drafts or archive copies. A case in point may be the so-called Tawagalawa Letter, a long text on a four-columned tablet, which is rhetorically framed as a letter to the king of Ahhiyawa.⁴⁹ Broad descriptions of the clay used for individual letter tablets are given in S. Kořak's *Konkordanz*, attesting to the fact that there are differences, but X-ray fluorescence analysis of the letters' clay composition, which can indicate or at least exclude certain geographical origins (see Mynářová, this volume), has not yet been performed for Hittite letters,⁵⁰ although this would be highly desirable.

How the tablets would have been protected on their journey remains an open question. The one example claimed to be a fragment of a clay envelope (a practice used, e.g., for contemporary Assyrian letters and attested also in Anatolia during the Assyrian Colony period of the Middle Bronze Age) has been shown not to be one at all.⁵¹ The use of baskets or boxes for transporting letters has been inferred, although insecurely, for Mesopotamia and Syria, but this is not actually attested in Hittite texts.⁵² A reference in one text to "opening" a tablet before reading presumably refers to unwrapping it.⁵³ Quite possibly the letters were wrapped in cloth or put in a bag, which was then tied with cords fastened with sealed clay bullae.⁵⁴ Hagenbuchner⁵⁵ drew attention to the fact that the letters recovered from Building D on Büyükkale (see section 2.3) were found associated with a great many sealed bullae.⁵⁶ Could they have been originally fastened to bags containing these letters?⁵⁷

In light of the evidence from the Hittite international correspondence found at Amarna (see Mynářová, this volume), it is conceivable that the letter tablets of the internal state correspondence were also intentionally baked in a kiln in order to secure their content and protect them during transport. There is no reference to such a process in the texts, and it would indeed be a peculiar way of treating documents clearly considered ephemeral (p. 41). The argument is complicated



FIGURE 2.2. A Hittite letter from Maşathöyük in portrait format (Alp 1991: no. 60).
© Türk Tarih Kurumu. Used with kind permission.

by the fact that the vast majority of Hittite text finds stems from contexts that were exposed to fire, usually during the destruction of the building in which they were contained. Waal has recently reviewed the evidence and tentatively concluded that Hittite tablets in general were not deliberately baked, adducing worm-holes in one tablet, cracks in the surface of others indicating that they had dried in the sun, and a partially unbaked tablet excavated at Kuşaklı.⁵⁸ It therefore seems unlikely that the letters were routinely fired, but it is hoped that the question will be fully resolved in the future by the application of scientific methods of clay analysis.



FIGURE 2.3. A Hittite letter from Maşathöyük in landscape format (Alp 1991: no. 21). © Türk Tarih Kurumu. Used with kind permission.

Besides clay tablets (Hittite *tuppi*⁵⁹) inscribed in cuneiform writing, the Hittites also made use of “writing boards” (written GIŠ.ḪUR, possibly for Hittite *gulzatar*).⁶⁰ If the one recovered example of a contemporary writing board from the shipwreck of Uluburun⁶¹ is anything to go by, these were folding tablets, probably covered in wax on which a message could be inscribed or incised (fig. 2.4). Wooden tablets were sealed by impressing a seal on a lump of clay (bulla) applied over the cords used to bind them.⁶² There are references to extended communications using both writing boards and clay tablets for different stages of the correspondence.⁶³ Not only is it clear therefore that letters were written on writing boards, it appears that letter writing, even relating to the same issue, could be conducted on both media (see also p. 51).

But there is much debate as to what type of writing would have been used on these boards. Most recently, Willemijn Waal has argued that the writing board among the Hittites was solely used for writing in Anatolian Hieroglyphic script⁶⁴, although this remains controversial.⁶⁵ If Waal is correct, the choice of medium for a letter might have to do with the type of scribe who was available—a cuneiform or a hieroglyphic scribe. Indeed, there appear to have been special scribes who may be connected with writing on these wooden tablets, the “scribes on



FIGURE 2.4. The wooden writing board from the shipwreck of Uluburun, late 14th century BC. The tablet's two boxwood leaves, each 3.5 inches high, were joined by three ivory hinges (only two of which have been recovered), allowing the writing board to be opened and closed. © Institute of Nautical Archaeology. Used with permission.

wood" (LÚ.MEŠ DUB.SAR GIŠ), who are listed separately from "normal" (presumably cuneiform) scribes in personnel lists and had their own hierarchies.⁶⁶ If Waal is not correct in assuming the exclusive use of a different type of script for the writing boards, the use of tablets or writing boards for communication may have been dictated by other factors, such as the subject matter of the correspondence.

Finally, the practice of writing in hieroglyphic script on lead strips, attested for Luwian-language letters in the 8th century BC, existed already in the Hittite period although the fragmentary nature of the sole known possible example makes it impossible to know whether this was a letter.⁶⁷ The language of this fragmentary piece cannot be determined for certain, although it is likely to be Luwian.

The Hittites adopted cuneiform from Mesopotamia, and the script remained strongly associated with the Akkadian language.⁶⁸ As elsewhere in the contemporary Middle East, Akkadian was the language of international diplomacy and scholarship. However, the vast majority of the state correspondence, except that with the vassals in Syria, was written in Hittite. Hittite was apparently used as a language of state throughout Anatolia in the 14th century, as evidenced also by a letter found at Amarna in Egypt sent to the Pharaoh from Arzawa, in which the

scribe asks his Egyptian counterpart to write back in Hittite.⁶⁹ Hittite remained the language of state correspondence in the 13th century, even at a time when we now assume that the more widely spoken language of the population was Luwian.⁷⁰ However, there are two fragmentary cuneiform letters in Luwian, although too broken to understand.⁷¹ One of them is followed by a secondary letter (see section 3.3) in Akkadian, and the names of the scribes involved are also Akkadian.⁷²

Numerous scribes, particularly at Maşathöyük, had Akkadian names.⁷³ Were these assumed names, or did these scribes actually hail from Akkadian-speaking regions in Syria or Mesopotamia? Scribes and other experts using the cuneiform script are certainly well attested as traveling between Syria, Assyria, Babylon, and Hattusa.⁷⁴ But none of the relevant scribes at Maşathöyük uses a cuneiform ductus that resembles Syrian or Babylonian writing, and it is therefore more likely that Hittite cuneiform scribes liked to take Akkadian names in order to signal their prestigious cuneiform literacy.

Although the only explicit testimony for Hittite scribes writing letters in Akkadian is contained in the Akkadian postscript to the Luwian letter mentioned above,⁷⁵ there is further evidence in the form of instructions to a Hittite scribe to write back in “Babylonian” (*pabilā’u*),⁷⁶ perhaps for reasons of confidentiality so that others would not understand the communication. And another letter contains the extraordinary admission that the sender’s messenger had “thrown away” a missive to the king because it was written in Babylonian:

(7–8) Regarding the fact that Wandapaziti drove to my lord in haste
(9–10) and “threw away” the tablet which he had taken off, (11–13) I have
not yet written to my lord the reason for which he threw it away.⁷⁷ (14–15)
When the tablet was...ed, the scribe wh[o wrote the tablet?] for me, (16–
17)...in Babylonian, [I/he do/did] not kno[w]... (KBo 18.54 obv. 7–17)

Even if the messenger, who is explicitly named, did not know Babylonian, the incident implies that he would have been able to read Hittite cuneiform.

3.2 *The Correspondents and the Subjects of their Letters*

From the previous discussion, it will be clear that while there were letters written on other materials and in other scripts, what survives are the clay tablets inscribed in cuneiform. A defining feature of the Hittite use of cuneiform, and very different from contemporary practice in Syria and Mesopotamia, is that the Hittites did not appear to use the script for private legal documents: all use of cuneiform was in some way associated with the state and temples, essentially the royal and priestly administration.⁷⁸ On the other hand, the profession of scribe would seem to have been the most widespread administrative office,⁷⁹ as evidenced by the hieroglyphic seal-impressions on clay bullae, from which it is also apparent that different offices, or titles, could be held by the same individual at the same time.

Hittite letter-writers had a strict code of address and greeting formulae which expressed the relative status of those participating in the correspondence.⁸⁰ Sometimes a letter consists of nothing more than an extended greeting formula and a conventionally phrased request to write back.⁸¹ Even if the letters are broken, these first few lines often allow us to infer the status of sender and recipient. Letters to inferiors, for example, position the receiver's name second and often omit the greeting formula entirely. The following discussion of senders and recipients is based on the evidence assembled in the Appendix (for specifics see there).

At present we have comparatively few examples of letters exchanged between the king and queen, although it has been indicated that a number of these are among the unpublished texts from Ortaköy.⁸² At Hattusa, the known letters were exchanged between the 13th-century king Hattusili III and his powerful wife Puduhepa, or after Hattusili's death, when she remained "Great Queen," between her and her son Tudhaliya IV. Letters to and from the king are proportionately plentiful among the Maşathöyük texts. His most frequent addressees there are Kassu, the "Chief Army Herald," and Himuili, the "Commander of the Watchpoint." The first of these is a military position, the second usually interpreted as mainly belonging to the civil administration.⁸³ Kassu and Himuili also communicate with each other as equals, in a tone that is frequently less than friendly. In Hattusa, letters from the king or queen to officials are rare, either being sent to officials in the capital when he or she was away or surviving as copies or drafts. The one letter from the queen to an official, one Tattamaru, appears to be a postscript, probably to a letter written by the king to someone in Hattusa.⁸⁴ Another letter shows the queen being kept abreast of military matters by an official at a crucial historical juncture.⁸⁵ Military officials operating at a distance from Hattusa would report to the king on decisions they had made and operations they were conducting. In one case reports from various military officials were gathered into one letter and sent to the king, asking for an oracle to be consulted.⁸⁶

The gods played a key part in decision making, and issues relating to oracles are well represented in the corpus. Not only the king but also officials in the palace and urban administration concerned themselves with reports on augury or dreams. One letter found at Kuşaklı, ancient Sarissa, was sent by the town head-man (^{L10}HAZANNU) to the "Chief of the Palace Servants," reporting negative oracle results and asking for the (local?) augurs to double-check.⁸⁷ In another letter, the king corrected the augury results of his augurs, instructing them to make new observations.⁸⁸

Movements of troops and other personnel are frequently mentioned, especially in the period of Tudhaliya III and in the archive at Maşathöyük, where defense was needed against the Kaska invaders. Officials communicated and squabbled with each other about the minutiae of human resources. In one case

an official in Maṣaṭhōyūk and another in Kizzuwatna in Plain Cilicia (modern Adana region), calling himself “The Priest,” conducted an extended correspondence about the transfer of twenty staff. The great distance involved for this communication and the envisaged transfer of personnel is remarkable, as is the fact that the matter is to be referred for mediation to the palace, presumably based at Ortaköy (ancient Sapinuwa) at the time:

Thus speaks the Priest, say to Kassu: Concerning what you wrote to me as follows: ‘Your twenty people are in the environs⁷ of the town Zikkasta. And because (my district) is a primary watchpoint, I will not give them to you on my own authority/of my own accord. Report them to the palace.’ I am now in the process of reporting my (missing) servants to the palace. And because the land of Kizzuwatna is (also) a primary watchpoint, if your servants come down here neither will I give them back to you! (HKM 74; translation after Hoffner 2009: 235)

It appears that the transfer of personnel would have been possible without recourse to the palace, had the areas concerned not each been a “primary watchpoint.” Another letter⁸⁹ may be connected with this affair, which seems to have involved a number of officials in various locations sending letters on both tablets and writing boards.

Letter writing was not confined to palace walls. The king and his officials also received or sent letters while on the road. A good example of the lively messenger and letter traffic that could accompany traveling dignitaries is provided by a letter sent by a high official detailing his failed attempts to catch up with some Assyrian envoys, one of whom was to meet up with the letter’s recipient, either the king or another member of the royal family.⁹⁰ Letters received or written on the road may have been kept, in the original or as a copy, until returning home. An example is provided by an Akkadian-language letter found at Hattusa which seems to have been written by the king while traveling in Syria (possibly sent from Karkamiš), mentioning a meeting with the Egyptian king envisaged prior to a meeting with a Syrian vassal.⁹¹

3.3 *Piggy-back Letters*

At the end of a letter, another, usually shorter message could be appended, referred to as a “piggy-back letter” or German *Zweitbrief* (“secondary letter”). This occurs frequently, and usually the sender of this second message is someone other than the sender of the main letter, very often a scribe.⁹² On one occasion, the king commissioned a postscript to one of his own letters, with a separate message to someone other than the main addressees.⁹³ There is no apparent rationale as to who could write such a secondary letter, other than that an opportunity presented itself to write to someone stationed in the same place where the main

letter was already being sent to. The postscripts thus offer us valuable information on who was to be found in whose company, or at least in a nearby location.

It is in these usually short postscripts that we come closest in all of the Hittite cuneiform sources to glimpsing the everyday concerns and personal affairs of Hittite officials. On the whole, the conduct of personal affairs by officials by means of sending a cuneiform letter is restricted to these postscripts. To write of personal issues in a letter was entirely the prerogative of the royal family. It would not have been appropriate, it seems, for an official to write a main letter to another official on personal business. Occasionally, it appears that a member of the royal family wrote a short greeting to another family member in the main letter and that an official used the opportunity to attach a much longer postscript. A good example is a letter inscribed with two messages, moreover in two different handwritings: the main letter is a short greeting from king Tudhaliya IV to his mother Puduhepa, covering just half of the tablet's obverse, while its remainder and all of the reverse are devoted to a message from [x-]^{d2}LUGAL-*ma* to Palla dealing with family affairs: there is talk of "your mother" and the "son of Palla."⁹⁴ In such a case, it seems that the main communicative content is contained in the postscript, but that it would not have been possible to send such a letter unless on the back of official state correspondence. Does this indicate a close state supervision of all correspondence, or at least a conception of communication by letter that made personal correspondence inappropriate for anyone but the royal family? Nevertheless, the fact that the possibility to write opportunistic "piggy-back letters" existed in the first place is evidence for a communication system that is much less streamlined than, say, the Neo-Assyrian state correspondence (Radner, this volume).

Many postscripts contain only a conventional greeting and a request for a reply, or sometimes a similarly conventionally phrased complaint that the correspondent had failed to reply to a previous communication. But sometimes far more complex narratives emerge. The so-called Tarhunmiya dossier concerning a scribe's house that was being improperly taxed in Mašathöyük has been reconstructed almost entirely from postscripts to various authorities solicited for help.⁹⁵ Also, other postscripts concern property belonging to the writer and demonstrate that at least some officials found themselves stationed away from their place of residence or origin.⁹⁶ Uzzu, who received the most postscripts in the Mašathöyük letters and was thus most likely stationed there, sent a "piggy-back letter" concerning his house in Hattusa.⁹⁷

3.4 Messengers

In a passage of a treaty with a vassal state, the Hittite king advises his counterpart not to trust messengers if what they say is not the same as what is written on the tablet they are carrying.⁹⁸ Frequently there was no need seen for the messenger to carry a letter at all: it was common for messages to be delivered

orally, as demonstrated by a remark of the Western Anatolian vassal king of Mira in a letter that accompanied the Hittite official Pazzu, who may have fulfilled a long-term ambassadorial role in Mira,⁹⁹ on his journey back to Hattusa:

Pazzu has recently become ill, and his ancestral gods have begun to trouble him. I have just sent him (back to Hattusa) to worship his ancestral gods. When he finishes worshipping the deities, may my lord send him back immediately. Let my lord also question him concerning the affairs of the land. (KBo 18.15, 4–19; translation after Hoffner 2009: 322)

The primary form of communication, the normal and default setting for contact, was the face-to-face meeting. Letters are clearly second best. When a personal meeting was not possible, reliable representation was needed to support one's request or report, especially in dealings with the king. Beyond passively reading out messages communicated by letter, scribes at the royal court sometimes appear to be arguing the case of the petitioners.¹⁰⁰ More usually, perhaps, the messenger delivering the letter was expected to act as advocate.

In Hittite, the most common term used to denote someone concerned with the delivery of messages¹⁰¹ is *halugatalla*-, “messenger.”¹⁰² This term appears to be more a description of the function than a proper professional title: it seems indicative that no corresponding hieroglyphic sign has yet been identified among the many professional designations documented on hieroglyphic seals. However, several passages in the state correspondence speak of “my messenger” or “your messenger,” which might indicate that officials sent men under their command; there are also messengers attached to certain cities.¹⁰³ But a telling passage from a bad-tempered exchange between the officials Kassu and Himuili from Maşathöyük, ancient Tapikka, indicates that all messengers used by the officials ultimately belonged to the king:

Why are you (pl.) not sending my messengers (back) to me? Are your (sg.) servants too tired (to do so)? Do the messengers not belong to our lord? Even the land (itself) belongs to our lord. If only you (sg.) would keep writing me everything about how it is there. (HKM 55: 29–35; translation after Hoffner 2009: 201)

The messenger here was evidently supposed to bring a message back. If this did not occur it occasioned complaints. In the only case where a “messenger” is both given this title and identified by name, in a letter from Maşathöyük, the official Himuili complained to his superior Huilli that the latter had not sent back a message with his messenger and that he would now be sending another messenger, Sanda, to whom Huilli was to hand over certain weapons.¹⁰⁴

Modern scholarship distinguishes between different types of messenger, although we must not necessarily expect the Hittite terminology to differentiate neatly between these functions.¹⁰⁵ There were those who delivered a message

(whether there was a tablet or not) and had the authority to negotiate on the sender's behalf (envoys), and those whose task was merely to deliver the letter (couriers).

The latter function of courier is probably designated by a title written with Sumerographic ^{LU}KAS₄.E, literally "runner" (Hittite realization unknown). How much actual running such men would have done is unclear, especially as the distances involved were frequently too great,¹⁰⁶ but the implication would seem to be that they were traveling speedily. The courier is one of the officials "who sleep up in the palace," according to the *Instructions to the Gatekeeper*.¹⁰⁷ It is presumably his easy access to king and palace that made one courier a good candidate for the assassination of king Hantili.¹⁰⁸ These instances and two more references to "a courier from the palace"¹⁰⁹ may indicate a reserve of couriers managed by the palace. A specialized "scout courier" is thought to have transported messages through dangerous territory.¹¹⁰

In one ritual context, where one would expect the participants to appear with representative objects, the "runners" are paired with horses.¹¹¹ This provides a connection with another term used specifically for mounted bearers of messages, the "rider," written with Akkado-graphic ^{LU}PETHALLU (Hittite realization unknown). Such a "rider" was supposed to deliver a tablet to the king of Egypt, according to this passage:¹¹²

As far as the issues regarding Egypt are concerned, as soon as you hear, write to me, my son. And as I have written this tablet to the king of Egypt, let your rider carry it. (KUB 26.90 i 1'-6'; cf. Hagenbuchner 1989b: 13-14)

There is a functional overlap between the "runners" and the "riders," who currently are not attested in the internal Hittite state correspondence: both were charged with transporting messages over long distances, with a view to speedy conveyance. We may certainly see the "rider" as a courier on horseback. Another rider appears in the context of diplomatic dealings with Egypt, in a situation where the impending winter clearly makes speed important. Queen Puduhepa's letter to Ramses II of Egypt mentions a rider in connection with a series of communications between Hattusa and Egypt that involved both writing boards and tablets (section 3.1):

Concerning the fact that I wrote to my brother as follows: 'What civilian captives, cattle and sheep should I give (as a dowry) to my daughter? In my lands I do not even have barley. The moment my messengers reach you, let my brother dispatch a rider to me and let them bring documents (lit. writing boards) to the lords of the land and let them take away the captives, cattle and sheep which are in their charge and let them (i.e. the lords of the land) be of service to them.' I myself have sent messengers and tablets to them... The messengers went in, but he hurried back, your rider

[did not] come and my messenger did not come either. Thereupon I sent Zuzu, charioteer and eunuch, but he was delayed. At the moment that Pihasdu did arrive, it was already winter... (KUB 21.38: 17–23; translation after Hoffner 2009: 283–284)

Note the gradation from the nameless “messengers” to the “rider” to Zuzu, charioteer and eunuch, clearly a grandee. Similarly, a fragmentary text from Hattusa appears to distinguish between the failure of a “courier,” possibly due to enemy activity, and the arrival of a named individual, Iyaliya, who is then sent to the king, notably said to “drive,”¹¹³ presumably referring to travel by chariot:

(3') they will kill him... (4') and the courier [of] the palace who... (5') on him too [their?] hands... | (6') Iyaliya has driven over to me... | (13'–14') I sent o[ver] Iya[liya] to Your Majesty my lord... (KBo 18.57, obv. 3'–6', 13'–14'; cf. Hagenbuchner 1989b: 101–105)¹¹⁴

“Charioteers,” written as Akkadographic ¹⁰KARTAPPU (Hittite realization unclear), were frequently connected with the business of delivering messages. Especially during the 13th century there is ample evidence that these officials were utilized as envoys to carry diplomatic messages, assuming key functions in foreign relations.¹¹⁵ Relatives of vassal kings could hold positions among the Hittite king's charioteers, further underscoring the position's high status and its tie to international diplomacy.¹¹⁶ Hattusili III stressed in his address to the king of Ahhiyawa how a charioteer was not just any old person, and that the one he has sent to him, Dabala-Tarhunda, who was to be detained as a hostage if the allied king so wished, was linked by marriage to the family of the queen, a very important family in Hattusa.¹¹⁷ “Charioteers” were clearly grandees, the term designating a social class rather than a trade. Other high-status individuals could be used as envoys, too, such as in one case a cup-bearer.¹¹⁸ Cup-bearers were frequently literate, as the sealings from the Nişantepe cache from Hattusa indicate.¹¹⁹

To conclude, apart from the “couriers,” there is little evidence for a special reserve of professional messengers, specifically trained for that role. High-status individuals were frequently used as envoys and were expected to intercede actively on the sender's behalf, strengthening the message as communicated in the letters they transported.

3.5 *Horses and Mules*

We have already encountered horses in connection with the “runners” (at least in a ritual context) and discussed riders and charioteers, both associated prominently with horses.¹²⁰ There is currently no evidence from Hittite cuneiform texts that letters or messengers were transported by mule, the latter a key component in the organization of the Neo-Assyrian communication network (Radner, this volume).

But perhaps mules had a role to play after all, if one considers the professional title “Scribe of the *Donkey House.”¹²¹ This title is attested on a seal impression in hieroglyphic writing from Hattusa (fig. 2.5), as is the related title “Charioteer of the *Donkey House.”¹²² The precise nature of the equid represented by the hieroglyphic sign used in these titles, conventionally interpreted as a donkey (Laroche 1960: L. 101), has been extensively discussed, albeit without a definitive conclusion.¹²³ There are two forms of this sign: one where the equid’s head has a single swept-back ear (Laroche 1960: L. 101/2), and another where this type of head features a kind of harness (Laroche 1960: L. 101/1). This contrasts with another, more common hieroglyphic sign that shows a more readily recognizable donkey head with two characteristically large ears (Laroche 1960: L. 100). Does the sign L. 101/1–2 in fact represent a mule?¹²⁴ There are good reasons for this assumption, beyond the fact that mules indeed have smaller ears than donkeys.

That the Hittite state used mules for long-distance communications is clear from some “letter-orders” from Middle Assyrian Harbe (modern Tell Chuera) in northeastern Syria, which concern provisioning for a passing Hittite diplomatic mission carrying presents and messages between the Hittite and the Assyrian rulers.¹²⁵ The embassy headed by the Hittite diplomat Teli-šarruma, on his way back from a trip to the Assyrian capital Assur (modern northern Iraq), was to be provided with rations, including fodder for four teams of four horses each, three teams of mules, and six donkeys. It is clear from these texts that feeding donkeys and mules for transport was considerably cheaper than feeding horses



FIGURE 2.5. Impression of the hieroglyphic seal of Nini, “Scribe of the Mule House,” from Nišantepe, Hattusa. The sign used for “mule” is L.101/2 (according to the system established by Laroche 1960). Reproduced from Herbordt 2005: pl. 50, no. 634, with kind permission.

(see also Radner, this volume). However, according to the Hittite Laws (§180), the price of a mule (one mina = 40 shekels) was far in excess of that of a horse (10–20 shekels).¹²⁶ This is a significant price difference that can be compared with the Neo-Assyrian evidence (see Radner, this volume). Both mules and horses were thus expensive, either in their acquisition or in their maintenance, and their use was therefore mostly the preserve of the state. However, a Hittite legal text indicates that the palace, or more particularly the queen, could grant officials (the use of) mules and horses,¹²⁷ sometimes specifically for the purpose of long journeys of clearly international significance, such as to Babylon.¹²⁸ But should the animals die while in their care, the officials were responsible for replacing them from their own estates.¹²⁹

Having established that the Hittites indeed used mules, we can return to two further instances of the hieroglyphic sign L. 101/2 that may represent these long-eared animals. First, in a hieroglyphic inscription in the Luwian language from the sacred pool at Yalburt (Konya province, Turkey), Tudhaliya IV boasts of having either used or faced, depending on interpretation, 4,100 *aliwanisa* (the translation of this word is disputed) in an obscure but clearly hostile context, emphasizing that there was no corresponding number of the kind of equids denoted by the sign L.101/2.¹³⁰ A related phraseology is usually encountered with reference to troops and horses or chariotry in cuneiform Hittite annalistic texts.¹³¹ It seems unlikely that Tudhaliya would have boasted about facing, or using, donkeys, while tough and expensive mules (see below) would certainly be worthy of mention in a royal inscription. Moreover, in mountainous Lycia, where the campaign was taking place, it is quite conceivable that mules would have been used for military purposes by either an enemy or by the Hittite king himself. But as there is no other evidence for the military use of mules among the Hittites, this passage remains unclear for the moment.

Second, a recently published hieroglyphic stamp seal from the Hatay Archaeological Museum may hold a further clue as to the identity of the animal denoted by the sign L. 101/2. The name currently read as Tarkasnatala is known from a hieroglyphic seal impression from Boğazköy¹³² in the spelling L.101/2-*tà-la-a*. In the Hatay seal the sign form used for the first part of the name depicts the entire animal rather than only its head (fig. 2.6). This is the case with various sets of sign forms in hieroglyphic writing, where an abbreviated and a full form of the same sign are often found together in the signary, particularly with animal heads.¹³³ The animal's overall proportion as well as the shape of the head would seem to support the identification with a mule rather than a donkey, although a horse is not excluded. If the Boğazköy seal impression and the Hatay seal in fact offer differently drawn but identical spellings of the same name, the more detailed representation of the animal on the latter would considerably clarify the identity of the equid denoted by the

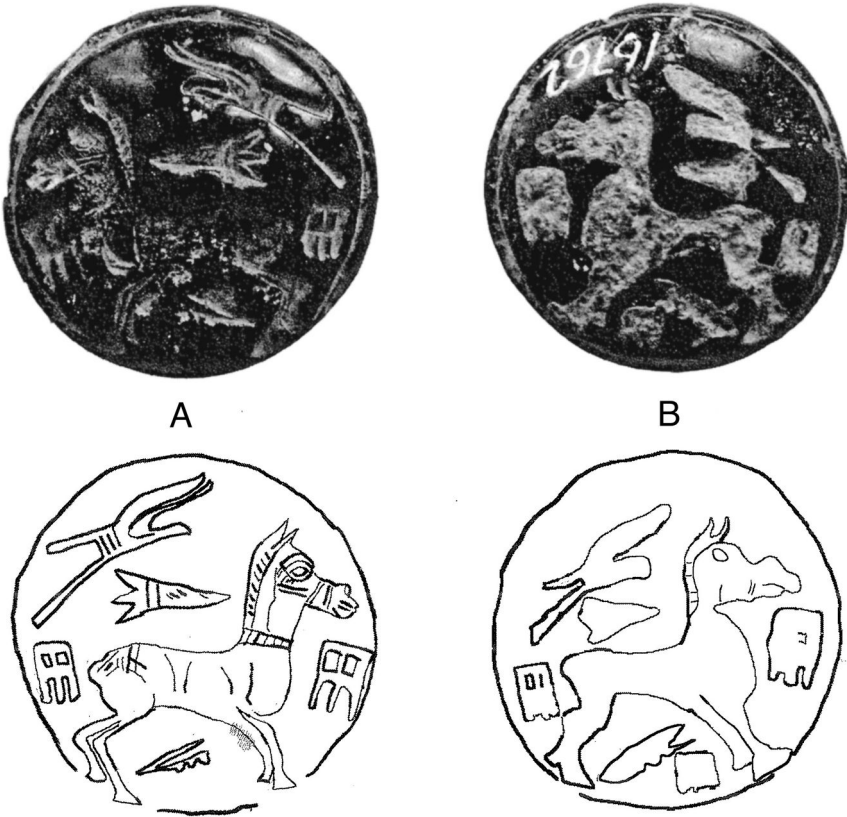


FIGURE 2.6. Seal of the scribe Tarkasnatala (meaning “Mule-man”), from Hatay Archaeological Museum. The first part of the name may be written with a full-bodied form of the sign L.101/2. Reproduced from Dinçol, Dinçol & Peker 2012: 199 fig. 8a + b, with kind permission.

sign L.101/2. While it may be too early to reach definitive conclusions concerning the complex group of hieroglyphic signs for equids and the various Luwian words they may express, the Hatay seal will doubtless play a significant role in the final analysis.

In any case, if we consider translating our hieroglyphic titles as “Scribe of the Mule House” and “Charioteer of the Mule House,” there is a likely conceptual connection to the “Man of the Mule Stable” as attested in the Neo-Assyrian documentation,¹³⁴ apparently in a position of relatively elevated status within the Assyrian administration, which may be linked to the key role of the mule in the imperial communication system. That there should have been personnel specifically associated with the “mule house” also in the Hittite administration may suggest a similar value of the mule in the Hittite view, although whether this

is connected to a role specifically in enabling long-distance communications or more generally for all-round transport purposes must remain open.

Although there is currently limited explicit evidence, it is likely that state communication was regularly conducted by mounted messengers on horses or mules. The high expense alone would have necessitated a substantial involvement of the state and thus indicates the centralized underpinnings of the organization of the state communications. There is, however, no evidence for a relay system using riders like the one operated by the Neo-Assyrian Empire and its successor states (see especially Radner and Kuhrt, this volume).

3.6 *Passports*

Connected to long-distance overland travel is a concept known to the Hittites under the Luwian word *zarsiya-*. In the so-called Tawagalawa Letter,¹³⁵ the Hittite king explains what this is to the renegade Piyamaradu, when he tries to persuade him to leave the protection of the king of Ahhiyawa, where he is hiding, in order to come to Hattusa:

A *zarsiya-*, moreover, in the land of Hattusa is as follows: if someone is given *sealed gifts*,¹³⁶ no harm will be done to him. Furthermore, I have conveyed this *zarsiya-*, saying ‘Come, make your ad[ress?] to me’, and I will put you on the road, and I will write to my brother (i.e., the King of Ahhiyawa) that I have put you on the road. (KUB 14.3 ii 62–66)

This type of guarantee allowed safe passage to envoys and may well have taken physical form as a passport, comparable to the documents attested in the Amarna and Persian period (Mynářová and Kuhrt, this volume). Whether such passports would have been used by internal messengers to navigate Hittite territory is unclear.

3.7 *Roads*

Within the Hittite lands, the system of roads protected by delegated officials and provided with road stations was key. The *Instructions to the Watchpoint Commander* (Akkadographic ^{LU}BĒL MADGALTI, Hittite *auriyas ishas*) make it clear that the Hittites distinguished various grades of roads. Most important were the “long roads” (frequently translated as “main roads”). It was the commander’s duty to make sure these were kept clear and to post lookouts at night from watchtowers to observe them.¹³⁷ There are two words in Hittite for “road”: *palsa-* refers to the major roads just described, and *haruwa-* to a minor path, whose Sumerographic writing (KA.GÌR, Akkadographic PADĀNU) would seem to indicate that this was specifically a footpath.¹³⁸

No Hittite road has yet been identified with certainty, and it remains unclear whether they were paved, although this is thought to be unlikely.¹³⁹ But

strategically positioned roads were clearly fortified. A letter from Kassu to the king quotes what the Kaskan enemy is saying to himself:

The enemy who has already invaded Tarittara numbers 7,000! He isn't leaving behind oxherds (or) shepherds. He is *supplying himself* with cattle. And he is saying: 'If they build this fortress, will not the roads lie open to them? But to us they will be closed. So what shall we do?' (ABoT 1.60, 10'-19'; translation after Hoffner 2009: 177)

The Hittite landscape, particularly to the south and west, is dotted with rock-cut monuments which frequently include hieroglyphic inscriptions. The traditional interpretation of these installations is that they were boundary markers delineating territorial units and areas of hegemony.¹⁴⁰ Another view, recently advanced, is that they served as way stations on routes, given that they are almost always found in the vicinity of water sources (and that they are frequently not immediately visible in the landscape, which does not seem to support their employment as border markers).¹⁴¹ But while the monuments and their inscriptions have been studied in detail, the sites themselves have yet to be properly excavated, which would be needed to verify this attractive hypothesis. If it is correct, the rock monuments would document a system of regularly used routes with road stations using the natural amenities of the landscape for rest and recuperation, as well as affording opportunity for religious attention to the gods (as represented by the depictions of the monuments) while on a journey.

IN CONCLUSION

What can be described as state correspondence in the Hittite world was intimately connected with the conduct of the king and the palace's interests. Those who conducted the correspondence of the state were essentially always conducting the king's correspondence. While resources clearly existed to facilitate internal state communication in writing, face-to-face communication (in person or by messenger) generally had priority, and written letters were in the main reserved for unusual or difficult cases. The cost of maintaining written long-distance communication was high, especially if involving horses, and the training necessary for the messengers extensive, especially if they needed to be able to read. The necessity for the messenger to explain the message comprehensibly and return an answer, with or without a tablet, calls for these people to have been reliable and known individuals.

Only very rarely are letters portrayed as reference documents; on the whole, they seem to have served as aide-mémoires in the transmission of messages. As a consequence, there does not seem to be any need for regular archiving, although the big letter corpora of the time of Tudhaliya III from Maşathöyük and Ortaköy

(sections 2 and 2.1), while they are the coincidental results of the destruction of the buildings they were stored in, demonstrate clearly that the volume of the internal state correspondence was large. These corpora of state correspondence, written during a time of crisis and war, also clearly demonstrate the importance of long-distance communication for the cohesion of the Hittite state. While busy with the Kaskan invasion from the north, king and palace were nevertheless able to engage with the affairs of state elsewhere.

Officials communicate on their own personal matters only in the form of postscripts appended to missives already being sent in matters of state, although the organization of messenger traffic lay within their remit, in that the messengers were under their authority. While those in higher state service could rely on the palace administration to provide couriers if necessary, the primary recourse would generally be to the pool of their own staff. This is consonant with a view of Hittite social organization that sees the officials as ruling their own spheres of power, with their own intersecting circles of dependents.

Let us conclude with some remarks on the ideology of Hittite state control in light of the state correspondence. From a modern perspective, the state's reliance on a relatively mobile supreme executive is striking.¹⁴² Not only did the king regularly go on campaign against persistently rebellious neighbors in Anatolia and Syria, he was also obliged to perform numerous festivals at various locations in the Hittite heartland. Failure to perform these correctly was expected to be punished by the gods and needed to be atoned for. While these festivals obviously had a religious function, the circuit of festival performance included some of the most strategically important cities, and the king's presence would have allowed for a review of the local military and other provisions.

Judging from our impressionistic set of evidence, we must assume that wherever the king went he was constantly bombarded with requests, in person or by message from all around the Hittite territories. The state correspondence throws an interesting light on the level at which some kings appear to have been personally involved in decision making (see p. 47). The image of the king as surrounded by the incompetence of his nobles and officials is known already from Old Hittite literary texts, such as the *Siege of Uršu* and the *Palace Chronicles*.¹⁴³ The ideology over and above the reality was that the king alone was competent to run the Hittite state.

But while this ideology shines through also in the letters, we should not forget that the available letters tend not to present the normal state of affairs. The methodological problems of their survival notwithstanding (section 2.3), most were written in the face of unusual situations or problems. The documented cases are those where the normal *modus operandi*—about which we know pitifully little because it was taken for granted and not documented—had failed. Most of the time, the officials were perfectly able to make decisions on their own.

APPENDIX

The following presents a breakdown of the state correspondence used as the basic corpus for this essay. Categorizations according to E. Laroche, *Catalogue des Textes Hittites* (CTH), are given beside publication, find spot and palaeography. For the last, the following sigla are used from S. Košák's online *Konkordanz der hethitischen Texte* (www.hethiter.net): mh "Mittelhethitisch," jh "Junghethitisch," sjh "Spätjunghethitisch." Where I disagree with these classifications I have used MS "Middle Script," NS "New Script," and LNS "Late New Script." In addition, the following abbreviations are used for specific find spots within Hattusa: Bk = Büyükkale; HaH = Haus am Hang ("House on the Slope"); T.I = Temple I, while k.A. stands for "keine Angabe" and denotes text finds without further information available concerning their specific find spot in Hattusa.

Included are also 36 letters from the relevant CTH categories that have been classified as international correspondence and ten that specifically belong to, or should be considered for inclusion in, the Egypto-Hittite correspondence. PS = postscript.

Royal Couple

CTH 180: KUB 23.85 Hattusa jh (PS to king's letter Marizza 2009: 172); CTH 187: KBo 18.2 p/10 jh; KBo 18.1 Bk D p-q/10-11 jh (PS to Lupakki); CTH 190: KUB 48.88 Hattusa jh (PS from Hišmi-Teššub to ?)

King to Official

CTH 185: KBo 8.21 Bk A r/10. CTH 186: KBo 18.46 Bk D o-p/10-11 jh; CTH 187: KBo 32.200 O-St T. VIII k.A. CTH 208: KBo 13.63 HaH jh (+ PS from king); KUB 31.101 Hattusa mh; KBo 16.52 Bk aa/22 jh; Bo 3268 Hattusa jh; KUB 26.90 Hattusa sjh

Official to King

CTH 188: KBo 18.52 Bk A rm 5 k.A.; KBo 18.59 Bk A rm 5 mh; KBo 18.74 Bk D o/10 MS jh; KBo 18.17 Bk E jh; KBo 18.29 Bk D MS (jh); KBo 18.60 Bk D MS? (jh); KBo 18.62 Bk D p/10 jh; KBo 18.16 Bk D p-q/10-11 jh; KBo 18.58 Bk D p-q/10-11 mh; KBo 18.30 Bk D p-q/10-11 jh; KBo 18.51 Bk D p-q/10-11 mh; KBo 18.31 Bk D p-q/10-11 jh; KBo 18.50 Bk D p-q/10-11 jh; KBo 18.54 Bk D p-q/10-11 mh? (+ PS to king); CTH 190: KBo 18.67 Bk D p/10 jh (+ PS from Palla to 'šī- [...]); KBo 18.56 Bk D n-o/10 LNS; KBo 18.106 Bk D p/10 jh; KBo 18.116 Bk D p-q/10-11 jh; CTH 194: KBo 8.18 Bk aa/16 mh; CTH 198: KBo 9.83 Hattusa LNS (jh) (+ PS); CTH 201: KBo 18.14 Bk A mh?; CTH 203: KUB 40.1 Hattusa sjh CTH 205: KUB 57.123 Hattusa sjh; CTH 209: KBo 18.91 T.I L/19 jh; KBo 18.53 Bk p-q/10-11 jh; KBo 18.75 Bk p-q/10-11 jh?; KUB 57.3 Hattusa sjh; KUB 18.3 T.I Südareal jh; CTH 210: KBo 8.22 Bk D mh; KBo 12.61 HaH L/18 sjh; KUB 23.94 Hattusa sjh; CTH 215: KBo 32.202 O-St VIII mh

Probably from Official to King

CTH 190: KBo 18.86 T.I mh; CTH 209: KBo 18.69 Bk A rm 4 mh; KBo 18.57 Bk A rm 5 mh; KBo 18.79 Bk E Mauerkasten g/14 jh; KBo 18.49 Bk A outside rm 6 mh; KBo 18.36 Bk C p/16 jh; KBo 18.32 Bk A rm 5; KBo 18.73 Bk p-q/10–11 jh; KBo 18.78 Bk p-q/10–11 jh (Marizza 2009: 145 Early Empire); KBo 18.72 Bk p-q/10–11 jh (+ PS from Ur-Teššub); KBo 18.64 Bk p-q/10–11 mh; KBo 18.34 Bk p-q/10–11 jh; KBo 2.11 Bk E jh; KBo 18.128 Bk p-q/10–11 mh?; KBo 18.33 Bk p-q/10–11 jh; CTH 210: KBo 14.49 Bk H (surface) mh?; KUB 23.100 Hattusa jh; KBo 18.88 Bk D n-o/14–15 jh

Official to Queen

CTH 187: KBo 18.6 Bk D p-q/10–11 jh (PS to Palla); CTH 188: KBo 18.11 Bk E jh; KBo 18.47 Bk B r/14 jh; KBo 18.45 Bk B q-r/13 jh; KBo 9.84 Bk D o/11 jh; KBo 18.13 Bk D p-q/10–11 NS (mh?); KBo 18.8 Bk D p-q/10–11 k.A.; CTH 192: KUB 19.23 Hattusa jh; CTH 195: KBo 15.28 Bk D m/12 mh; CTH 209: KBo 8.23 Bkaya jh LNS

Probably to Queen

KBo 18.9 Bk D l/12 sjh; KBo 18.114 Bk D p-q/10–11 jh

King to Vassal

CTH 182: KUB 19.55+ T.I jh; CTH 186: KBo 18.134 Bk A jh; KBo 18.48 Bk sjh; CTH 191: KUB 19.5+ T.I jh; KUB 3.56 Hattusa LNS (Akkadian); KBo 18.22 Bk D p/10 LNS (jh); CTH 209: KBo 18.27 Bk F sjh; KUB 57.11 Hattusa jh

Probably from King to Vassal

CTH 208: KBo 28.57+ T.I Syrian? (Akkadian); KUB 3.80 Hattusa NS? (Akkadian)

Vassal to King

CTH 187: KBo 28.83 Bk D o-p/14 Syrian (Akkadian); CTH 193: KBo 28.53 Bk A rm 6 Syrian (Akkadian); KBo 8.16 Bk G Syrian (Akkadian); CTH 202: KBo 18.15 Bk C jh; CTH 208: KBo 28.76 Bk A outside north of rm 6 Syrian (Akkadian); KBo 28.78 Bk A t/10 Syrian?; KBo 28.79 Bk A t/9–10 Syrian?; KBo 28.86 Bk D m/13–14 Syrian?; KBo 36.103 (?) Bk A rm 4 MA; KUB 42.70 Büyükkale Syrian?; KBo 28.56 Bk A fill r-s/11 (Hittite?); CTH 209: KBo 18.68 Bk p-q/10–11 mh (Hittite); KUB 23.87 Hattusa, LNS jh (not to king; Hagenbuchner 1989b: 229)

Probably Vassal to King

KUB 57.10 Hattusa jh

Vassal to Queen

CTH 188: KBo 18.12 Bk D p-q/10–11 jh (PS only); CTH 208: KBo 28.54 Bk A rm 4 Syrian (Akkadian); KBo 28.103 Bk A rm 4 jh (Akkadian); KBo 28.55 Bk A rm 4 Syrian (Akkadian)

Official to Official

CTH 188: KBo 18.4 Bk F d/12 LNS (jh); CTH 190: KBo 18.95 Bk E mh?; KBo 18.104 Bk A s/11–12 mh?; KBo 18.96 Bk D p-q/10–11 jh; KBo 18.97 Bk D p-q/10–11 (PS to Lupakki from “your son,” main letter not attributable); KBo 18.107 south of T.I surface, jh; KBo 18.100 Bk D Schutterde 1b jh; KBo 18.99 Bk D p-q/10–11 jh; Bo. 2009/2 Oberstadt, Tal vor Sarikale, mh; CTH 197: KBo 9.82 Bk B r/13 LNS; CTH 208: KBo 28.82 Bk C q-r/17 Assyrian/Mittanian (Akkadian); KBo 28.60 Bk E h-i/13 MA (Akkadian); KBo 28.89 Bk E MS? (k.A., Akkadian); CTH 209: KBo 18.66 Bk A rm 5 mh; KBo 18.87 Bk D p/10 jh; KBo 18.76 Bk p-q/10–11 MS; KBo 18.35 Bk p-q/10–11 mh; KUB 57.1 Hattusa jh; KUB 57.2 Hattusa jh; VS 28.129 Hattusa jh (Marizza MH); KBo 9.86 Bk A jh; KUB 23.97 Hattusa jh; KUB 23.86 Hattusa jh

Probably Official to Official

CTH 186: ABoT 2.4 Hattusa jh; KBo 28.99 T.I MS? (Akkadian); KBo 20.108 Bk D jh; KBo 18.77 Bk p-q/10–11 jh; CTH 190: KBo 18.98 Bk. D k.A.; KBo 18.101 Bk A s-t/12 MS (jh) + PS

Official to Vassal (Booked under Officials)

CTH 196: KBo 9.81 Hattusa jh

Sender and Recipient Unattributed

CTH 190: KBo 18.105 Bk A rm 6 jh; KBo 18.37 Unterstadt K/20 East mh; KBo 9.79 Bk D o/12 jh; KBo 18.103 Bk D p-q/10–11 MS? (jh); KBo 18.112 Bk D p-q/10–11 jh; KBo 18.110 Bk D p-q/10–11 jh; KBo 18.108 Bk D p-q/10–11 jh; KBo 18.113 Bk D p-q/10–11 jh; KBo 18.113 Bk D p-q/10–11 jh; KBo 18.102 Bk D p-q/10–11 MS (k.A.); KBo 18.115 Bk D p-q/10–11 jh; KBo 18.111 Bk D p-q/10–11 jh (just PS); KBo 18.109 prob. Bk D p-q/10–11 jh; Bo 2007/1 Oberstadt, Tal vor Sarikale mh; CTH 208: KBo 28.67 Bk A rm 4 MA (Akkadian); KBo 36.102 Bk A rm 6 Syrian (Akkadian); KBo 28.70 Bk A rm 5 NS (Akkadian); KBo 28.69 Bk A rm 5 MA? (Akkadian); KBo 28.73 Bk E MA (Akkadian); KBo 2.104 Hattusa (Akkadian?); KBo 36.106 Bk A p-q/9 k.A. (Akkadian?); KBo 28.87 Bk E (Akkadian); KBo 28.88 Bk A v/11 Syrian? (Akkadian); KBo 36.108 T.I k.A. (Akkadian); KBo 28.95 Bk D b/10 Syrian? (Akkadian); KBo 28.97 T.I Syrian? (Akkadian); KBo 28.100 T.I k.A. (Akkadian); KBo 28.101 Bk D p-q/10–11 NS? (Akkadian); KBo 36.107 T.I Mag 11 k.A. (Akkadian); FHL 64 Hattusa k.A. (Akkadian); CTH 209: KBo 18.39 Bk A rm 5 LNS (jh); KBo 18.7 Bk M jh; KBo 18.82 Bk D jh; KBo 18.26 Bk A jh; KBo 18.89 Bk F sjh;

KBo 46.63 Bk K jh; KBo 12.46 HaH LNS (jh); KBo 12.45 HaH jh; KBo 12.55 HaH jh; KBo 50.81 Unterstadt L-M/17 jh; KBo 49.134 HaH jh; KBo 12.40 HaH jh; KBo 12.62 HaH mh; KBo 18.19 Bk M jh; KBo 50.83 T.I jh; KBo 18.123 Bk D p/10 mh; KBo 18.44 Bk D p/10 mh; KBo 18.121 BK D p/10 jh; KBo 50.84 T.I jh; KBo 50.88 T.I jh; KBo 50.87 T.I? jh; KBo 47.1 Bk M jh; KBo 18.10 Bk M jh; KBo 47.2 Bk p-q/10-11 jh; KBo 18.119 Bk p-q/10-11 jh; KBo 18.129 Bk p-q/10-11 MS? (jh); KBo 18.63 Bk p-q/10-11 jh; KBo 18.40 Bk p-q/10-11 mh; KBo 50.90 T.I L/19 jh; KBo 18.53 Bk p-q/10-11 jh; KBo 18.83 Bk p-q/10-11 mh?; KBo 18.71 Bk p-q/10-11 jh; KBo 47.194 Bk p-q/10-11 jh; KBo 18.38 Bk p-q/10-11 NS (mh); KBo 18.70 Bk p-q/10-11 k.A.; KBo 18.81 Bk p-q/10-11 mh; KBo 18.94 Bk p-q/10-11 jh; KBo 18.93 Bk p-q/10-11 jh; KBo 18.85 Bk p-q/10-11 jh; KBo 18.125 Bk p-q/10-11 jh; KBo 18.90 Bk p-q/10-11 jh; KBo 18.42 Bk p-q/10-11 jh; KBo 18.124 Bk p-q/10-11 jh; KBo 47.191 Bk p-q/10-11 mh?; KBo 18.84 Bk p-q/10-11 mh; KBo 18.126 Bk p-q/10-11 jh; KBo 18.127 Bk p-q/10-11 k.A.; KBo 18.122 Bk p-q/10-11 k.A. (MS?); KBo 18.131 Bk p-q/10-11 mh; KBo 18.75 Bk p-q/10-11 k.A.; KBo 18.92 Bk p-q/10-11 MS (k.A.); KBo 18.55 Bk p-q/10-11 k.A.; KUB 60.62 Hattusa sjh; KUB 60.104 Hattusa jh; KUB 31.80 Hattusa jh; KUB 23.110 Hattusa jh; KUB 57.7 Hattusa jh; KUB 57.5 Hattusa jh; KUB 57.12 Hattusa jh; KUB 23.104 Hattusa jh; KUB 57.9 Hattusa jh; Bo 2006/1 AA 2007, 86-88 mh; KBo 18.43 T.I sjh; KBo 32.145 T.XII mh; KBo 32.140 T.XVIII mh; KBo 42.69 Bk mh; KBo 42.20 Bkaya mh; KBo 42.49 Bkaya sjh; VS 28.132 Hattusa jh; KBo 18.5 Bk D: p/10 jh; CTH 210: KBo 9.78 Bk N jh (+ PS to Luwa); KBo 40.5 Bk E jh; KBo 9.85 Unterstadt J/20; KBo 50.91 Unterstadt J/20 jh; KBo 10.8 Bk K sjh; KBo 14.50 Bk A mh; KUB 19.16 Hattusa jh; KUB 23.60 Hattusa jh; Durham 2465 Hattusa jh

Not a Letter?

CTH 187: KBo 50.78+ T.I jh; KBo 18.41 Bk p-q/10-11 LNS (jh); KBo 50.82 T.I; KBo 50.80 Unterstadt K/20 mh; KBo 50.102 T.I jh; KBo 18.61 Bk D p/10 jh; KBo 50.89 T.I jh; KBo 18.130 Bk p-q/10-11 MS (k.A.); FHL 87 Hattusa jh; IBoT 4.324 Hattusa jh; KUB 23.45 Hattusa jh; KUB 19.33 Hattusa jh; VS 28.106 Hattusa jh (not a letter: Waal 2010: 82 fn. 230)

International Correspondence

CTH 186: KBo 18.18 T.I sjh; CTH 187: KBo 13.57 HaH L/18 b/5-6 jh; CTH 188: KBo 28.77 Bk A u/11 to king (?) Assyrian/Mittanian script (Akkadian); KBo 28.81 Bk C q/16 from (?) king to? Assyrian/Mittanian script (Akkadian); CTH 190: KBo 18.28+ T.I; CTH 208: KBo 28.61++ Bk B r/14 + D o/14 + D m/13-14 + Bk fill poss. from A, MA (Akkadian); KBo 28.154 T.I unclear (Akkadian); CTH 209: KBo 18.135 Bk D jh; KBo 51.2 T.I sjh; KBo 52.2 T.I jh; KUB 26.70 Hattusa jh; KUB 23.98 Hattusa jh; KUB 23.109+ Hattusa jh; KUB 31.47 Hattusa, jh; KUB 21.40 Hattusa jh; CTH 210: HT 97 Hattusa jh; KUB 23.107 Hattusa jh; KUB 23.93 Hattusa sjh; KUB 26.88 Hattusa jh

Probably International Correspondence

KBo 36.105: Bk K w/4 (Akkadian); KBo 28.90 Bk F MA? (Akkadian); KBo 28.91 T.I (Akkadian); KBo 28.72 Bk E rm 3 (Akkadian); KBo 28.92 T.I NS? (Akkadian); KBo 28.144

Hattusa NS? (Akkadian); KUB 3.77 (Middle Assyrian); CTH 209: KUB 60.74 Hattusa sjh; KUB 57.4 Hattusa, jh; CTH 210: KBo 14.48 Bk A jh

Egypto-Hittite

KUB 57.124 Hattusa (Egypt? Akkadian); KUB 3.56 (Egypt, Akkadian); KUB 3.50 (Egypt, Akkadian); KBo 18.23 Bk sjh; KUB 26.89 Hattusa; KUB 26.53 Hattusa; KUB 60.150 Hattusa MS (jh); KUB 21.36 Hattusa jh; KUB 21.35 Hattusa jh; KUB 57.9 Hattusa jh; KUB 3.79 Hattusa jh; VBoT 7 Hattusa jh; KUB 3.48 (Egypt, Akkadian); KUB 3.35 (Egypt, Akkadian); KBo 28.102 T.I (Egypt? Akkadian)

Probably Egypto-Hittite

KBo 50.86 T.I k.A. (MS)

An Imperial Communication Network

The State Correspondence of the Neo-Assyrian Empire

Karen Radner

ABOUT 2,000 letters¹ from the Neo-Assyrian state correspondence are presently known, all of them the original documents as excavated on sites in Iraq, Syria and Turkey since the archaeological exploration of the Middle East started in the mid-19th century. Chronologically, these letters are rather unevenly distributed over the course of almost two centuries, from the reign of Adad-nerari III (r. 810–783 BC) to that of Assyria's last king Aššur-uballiṭ II (r. 612–608 BC). In addition to texts from the correspondence of these two monarchs, there are letters of Tiglath-pileser III (r. 744–727 BC), Sargon II (r. 721–705 BC), Sennacherib (r. 704–681 BC), Esarhaddon (r. 680–669 BC), Assurbanipal (r. 668–627 BC), and Sin-šarru-iškun (r. 627–612 BC).

The bulk of the state letters, about 1,200 texts, dates to the reign of Sargon II (Fig. 3.1), and in the third and final part of this chapter we will focus on the mechanisms of Assyrian imperial communication as emerging from that corpus, one of the largest of original state letters surviving from the ancient world. In the first part of the chapter, we will analyze the basics of the Assyrian imperial communication network, whose creation was instrumental in guaranteeing the cohesion of the empire. In the second part, we will discuss the available corpus and also raise the question to what extent Aramaic served as an epistolary language of the Assyrian Empire.

1 ASSYRIAN STATE LETTERS AND THE IMPERIAL COMMUNICATION NETWORK

The state letters are our best source for the Assyrian Empire's communication network. Unlike the case of the Neo-Babylonian period, there are no administrative documents that would inform us about the maintenance of the road system², and unlike that of the Persian period, there is no contemporary account that attempts to describe its structure as a whole.³ Instead, the letters elucidate very specific aspects and features, usually because they were written when there was a problem at hand. But in addition, the letters themselves,

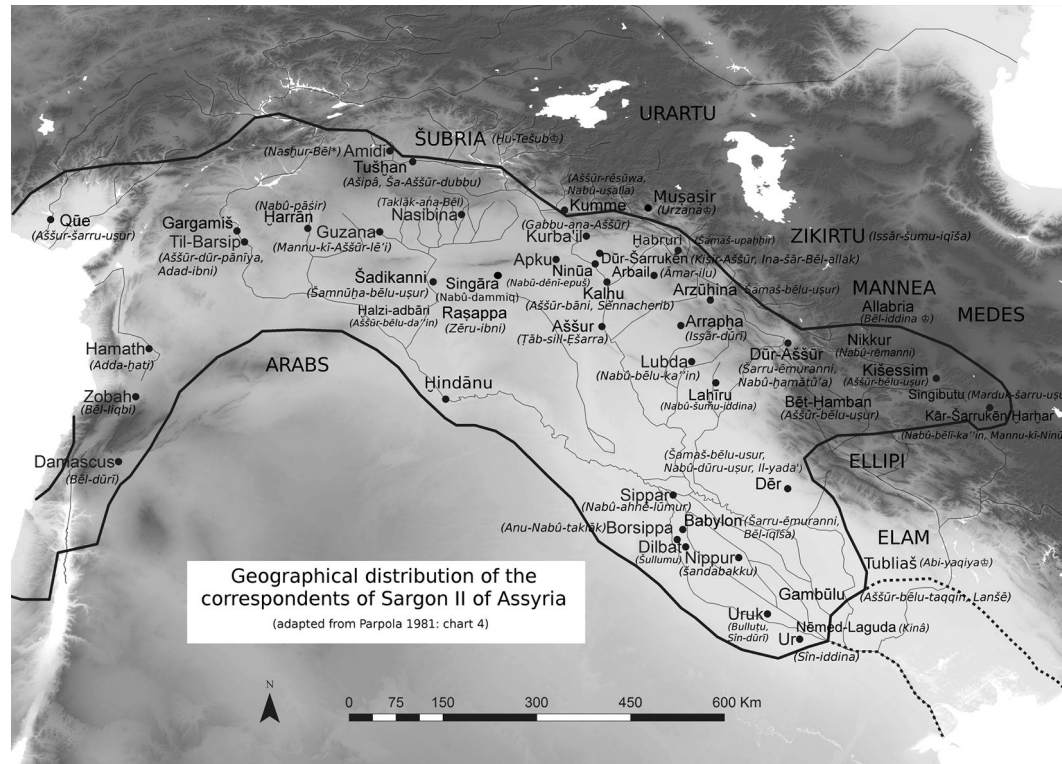


FIGURE 3.1. Map of the Assyrian Empire during the reign of Sargon II, illustrating the provenance of known state letters. Map created by Alessio Palmisano, after a sketch of the author. Based on data from Parpola 1981: chart 4, with additions and corrections by the author. The key differences are: the location of Rašappa; the attribution of the letters of Il-yada' to Der rather than Dur-Kurigalzu (cf. Postgate & Mattila 2004), of Aššur-dur-paniya to Til-Barsip rather than Šabirešu (cf. Radner 2006b) and of Mannu-ki-Aššur-le'i to Guzana rather than Tille (cf. already Parpola 1987); and the identification of Bel-duri, rather than Adda-hati, as governor of Damascus (cf. already Parpola 1987). ☙ = this correspondent is a vassal ruler rather than an Assyrian official; * = Nashur-Bel is the correct reading of the name of the governor of Amidi (cf. H.D. Baker & M.P. Streck in Baker 2001: 932).

their format and their language, offer much information about the organization of the system. In the following, we will first look at the letters before we turn our attention to the Royal Road and the innovative relay post that allowed the king to correspond with his officials with unprecedented speed and security across the extent of the empire. The section closes with a discussion of the surviving sources, highlighting certain methodological problems with the available documentation.

1.1 A Uniform Look across the Empire

The available text corpus consists of letters in the closely related but distinct languages Assyrian and Babylonian, recorded in the respective versions of the cuneiform script⁴ on clay tablets. The format of the state letters was standardized throughout the empire, whereas contemporary private letters, although they tended to follow the model of the state letters, were far less uniform in shape.⁵ The text of the message was inscribed on an oblong inner tablet roughly the size of a mobile phone or a Mars chocolate bar, that is, with a ratio of 1:2 between horizontal and vertical axis. Typical measurements are in the range of 2.5–3.5 × 5–7 cm for the smaller format and 4.5–6 × 9–12 cm for the bigger format. The Assyrian term for this tablet shape is *egirtu*.⁶

To prepare such a tablet, a cylinder of clay was flattened down by applying some pressure, resulting in an elongated oval cross-section.⁷ The edges of the tablet were then carefully finished, often made to bulge out slightly. This inner tablet was inscribed and then wrapped in a thin sheet of rolled-out clay, no thicker than 1–2 mm (Fig. 3.2). The resulting envelope was sealed and inscribed with the introduction of the letter, which identified the correspondents; this corresponds to the first part of the letter as inscribed on the inner tablet. Therefore, even without opening a letter, the recipient would know who was writing to him. Sometimes this resulted in the refusal of a letter, as was the case when Esarhaddon received a missive from a group of people from Babylon whom he labeled “Non-Babylonians,” roundly rejecting their claims to the special privileges of that city (see section 1.5):

I am herewith sending back to you, with its seals intact, your completely pointless letter that you sent to me. Perhaps you will say: “Why did he return it to us?” When the citizens of Babylon, who are my servants and love me, wrote to me, I opened (their letter) and read it. Now, would it be good that I should [accept and] read (a letter) from the hand of criminals who [disrespect] the god? (SAA 18 1: 16-rev. 4)

If the recipient was willing to accept the letter, the envelope was cracked open in order to access the private information contained on the tablet within. The sealed envelope constituted a key factor in the way information was safeguarded while a letter was in transit, when, because of the nature of the Assyrian relay



FIGURE 3.2. A letter in its partially opened envelope: SAA 15 288 and 289. Found with its envelope intact, the letter was opened only in the British Museum. The content of the letter reveals why the intended recipient may not have been keen to read it, thereby preserving it unopened. A man who had lost his job sent it to his superior as the fourth of a series of missives, without ever receiving a reply to his pleas: “Why is my lord silent (while) I wag my tail and run about like a dog? I have sent three letters to my lord. Why does my lord not consent to send an answer to (my) letter?” British Museum, 81–7–27,199 and 81–7–27,199A. Photograph by Greta Van Buylaere, with kind permission.

postal system (see section 1.3), it passed through many hands. Letters of the Neo-Assyrian period were generally not fired in kilns.

Although a few Neo-Assyrian letters have been found with their envelopes intact⁸, most of these documents are private in nature and none are part of the actual state correspondence between the king and his officials. All known envelopes are sealed with the impression of the sender’s seal; however, we may conclude from references in the textual sources that the state letters would have been sealed with the imperial Assyrian seal showing the rampant lion locked in mortal combat with the king (Fig. 3.3), rather than with the individual private seals of the senders.⁹ As we will further discuss in section 1.3, it was the impression of the imperial seal, a copy of which the king bestowed on a state official upon



FIGURE 3.3. *Clay sealing from Nineveh with an impression of the imperial seal. British Museum, BM 84672. Photo by Dick Hodges, with kind permission.*

his appointment, that made a letter eligible for transportation on the imperial high-speed communications network, the King's Road (*hul šarri*).

1.2 *Who Wrote the Letters?*

Not just their format but the language of the state letters, too, is remarkably homogeneous throughout the empire, with very noticeable formal rules and notions of appropriateness and politeness governing how the correspondent was to be addressed.¹⁰ All this highlights the fact that the letters were created by professionals who had all received the same training: the members of the Assyrian state administrations, the magnates (lit. the "Great Ones"), all had scribes at their disposal who, like themselves, had been dispatched from the center of the empire to their respective postings. This fact emerges most clearly in a letter from Sargon's state letters that concerns a royal inquiry regarding a scribe originating from Nineveh who had been posted in Laqê¹¹ on the Middle Euphrates; this results in the questioning of the scribes of the provinces of Laqê and Nemed-Issar¹², who are described as "servants of the king" (SAA 1 204).

When an official found himself without a scribe, this was unusual and he would immediately request a replacement to be sent. It clearly would not have done to recruit a local substitute. This is obvious from a short letter sent to Sargon

by a governor in one of the Zagros provinces along the tributaries of the Diyala, which is here quoted in full:

To the king, my lord: your servant Sin-na'di. Good health to the king, my lord! I have no scribe where the king sent me to. Let the king direct either the governor of Arrapha or Aššur-belū-taqin to send me a scribe. (SAA 15 17)

The governor was able to write this letter himself, exhibiting command over a good range of cuneiform signs although a bit rusty in regard to the spelling conventions¹³, and successfully adhering to the formal and linguistic conventions governing state letter writing. This demonstrates that he had undergone the relevant centralized training at some earlier point in his career. Unsurprisingly, then, also the kings of Assyria and their family members, including the women, were educated in the art of drawing up correspondence,¹⁴ and in the case of Assurbanipal, even an actual letter written in his own hand to his father Esarhaddon survives.¹⁵ While it is bland and banal in content, it follows correctly the conventions of format, spelling, and etiquette ("To the king, my lord, your servant Assurbanipal. Good health to the king, my lord. May the gods Nabû and Marduk bless the king, my lord!"); however, the "large and beginner's ungainly and uneven script," as Alasdair Livingstone¹⁶ emphasized, shows that, like the already discussed letter of the "man without a scribe", this was not the work of an assured professional hand.

To return to this first letter, the fact that it demonstrates a lack of practice and its writer's obvious assumption that the need to write himself was a temporary, and unfortunate, situation make it clear that under normal circumstances a specialized scribe would be expected to deal with the official's correspondence on his behalf, in the manner of a secretary. The Assyrian term for this function, at least in regard to the king's correspondence, is *bēl tēmi* (lit. "master of communications"), a term also attested in the Persian period, where it certainly refers only to the king's secretary-scribe (Kuhrt, this volume).

The nature of the internal state correspondence was always confidential and often top secret.¹⁷ This implies, of course, that the secretary-scribes had access to privileged information and therefore enjoyed the trust of their employers. Correspondents with a high volume of incoming letters also needed to rely on them to sort the incoming mail, as is clear from the postscript of an unsolicited letter to Esarhaddon, which the petitioner ends with a plea to the secretary-scribe:¹⁸

Whoever you are, o scribe who is reading (this), do not hide it from the king, your lord! Speak for me before the king, so that (the gods) Bel and Nabû may speak for you before the king! (SAA 16 32: rev. 17–22)

And indeed, in a fragmentary letter, albeit of a private nature, Esarhaddon remarks on the fact that his secretary was responsible for opening and reading his mail to him:

As [to what you wrote to me]: “You did not read [nor open the letter] which [I sent] to you.” How [would] I [not do] thi[s]? When a letter whi[ch you send to me comes] to [my sec]retary (EN—*te-e-[mi-ia]*), [he pe]rsonally [opens] the let[ter] and [makes me hear] its [infor]mation. [W]hy [should I read] a letter? I take care of myself. (When) I see [a letter], I do not open it nor r[ead it]. (SAA 16 6: 1’-rev. 1)

The maintenance of the correspondence of the king was the overall responsibility of the Palace Scribe. Although the palace included a numerous staff of scribes, it appears that in matters of great importance, it was indeed this high-ranking official who acted personally as the king’s private and confidential scribe and secretary.¹⁹

All the king’s letters were introduced with the words “the king’s word” (*abat šarri*, Babylonian *amat šarri*). The Palace Scribe and his staff issued “the king’s word” in a formal, concise manner, using very specific language that was designed to leave no room for misunderstandings. This style of writing renders a royal letter instantly recognizable, even if only a small fragment of it survives.²⁰ Apart from being a key tool in controlling and communicating with the royal officials, “the king’s word” was a central concept in Neo-Assyrian legal practice. The surviving state letters contain various attestations of petitioners appealing, in person or by letter, to receive “the king’s word,” which overruled any earlier decision and was considered legally binding.²¹ To appeal directly to the king was apparently the right of all, to the occasional frustration of royal officials whose judgment was questioned in this way.²²

Beyond issuing “the king’s word,” we may also assume that the Palace Scribe routinely received the king’s mail on his master’s behalf. As for the king’s correspondents, any letter sealed by the imperial seal and delivered by the imperial relay postal service was expected to be handed to them in person and as a matter of urgency: several royal letters contain the explicit order to act “the day you see this letter,”²³ and in turn, the officials often emphasize that they take action as soon as they receive news.²⁴ During the reign of Šamaš-šumu-ukin, Assurbanipal’s brother, as king of Babylon (r. 668–648 BC), there is a conflict documented between the Babylonian governor of Nippur and the Assyrian military official running the postal service in Nippur which shows clearly that under normal circumstances, messages and envoys were expected to be sent off without delay:

I spoke to Aššur-belū-taqqin, the prefect appointed in Nippur to pass on imperial correspondence (*unqāti*) and royal messengers, about the imperial correspondence and the royal servants who arrive and have to stay for three or four days in Nippur as he refuses to pass them on. (SAA 18 192: rev. 8’–12’).

1.3 The King's Road and the Imperial Relay Post

The Neo-Assyrian state maintained a privileged communication system for state letters and envoys traveling on state business. This system is likely to be an innovation of the reign of Shalmaneser III (r. 858–824 BC), when a number of administrative reforms were undertaken²⁵ that successfully consolidated the territorial gains of the past century and secured Assyria's position as the foremost power in the wider region. The introduction of the imperial seal, which served as a token of the power invested by the king in the state officials, is one such innovation that can be dated with confidence to the reign of Shalmaneser;²⁶ and as we shall discuss in section 1.4, these seals played such an integral role in the imperial communication strategy that the organization of the overall system must have been conceived at that time. The ability to communicate quickly and reliably across vast distances turned out to be a key element in the cohesion of the empire.

All Assyrian governors had to help maintain this imperial communication network, which was known as the "King's Road" (*hūl šarri*). How much of the King's Road a given governor was required to look after depended on the lay of the land and could result in an uneven distribution of the financial burden. Bel-duri, Sargon's governor of Damascus, one of the more arid provinces of the Assyrian Empire, referred to this in a letter to his king:

The king my lord knows that of the post stations, we (i.e. here in the province of Damascus) take care of three stages while they (i.e. the governors of the two northern neighbor provinces) take care of two stages each. (SAA 1 172: 30–33; for the Assyrian terminology used here see below).

The governor presented this bit of information on the maintenance of the King's Road in the context of a complaint about the lack of collaboration from his neighbors. According to a previous royal command, the two governors commanding the neighboring provinces were to share his burden of provisioning the imperial communication network by letting him raise food and fodder from the villages under their control, but they refused to do so. Bel-duri assumed that this situation would prompt an immediate reaction from the king, indicating how important the King's Road's maintenance was in his opinion:

Tomorrow the king my lord will surely kill me, saying: 'You are but a bunch of do-nothings!' (SAA 1 172: 19–21).

While the King's Road emerges from this letter as a fiscal responsibility shared by the empire's governors, it also was a physical reality, as the frequent references to fields adjoining it demonstrate.²⁷ At least inside the city of Nineveh (Assyrian *Ninūa*), after its development into the imperial capital under Sargon's successor Sennacherib, the width of the King's Road was protected by royal edict and made manifest by pairs

of inscribed steles set up on either side of the road, several of which have been discovered in the lower town of Nineveh (Fig. 3.4):

So that in the future there would be no diminution of the King's Road, I had steles made and they stood on each side, opposite one another. I measured the width of the King's Road²⁸ as 52 large cubits. At any one time, when (anyone of) the people living in this city tears down his old house and builds a new one—if the foundation of his house encroaches upon the King's Road, they will hang him on a stake over his house. (Grayson & Novotny 2012: no. 38: 19–27).



FIGURE 3.4. One of the steles erected by king Sennacherib in Nineveh to protect the width of the stretches of the Royal Road leading through the city. British Museum, BM 124800. Height: 127.6 cm, width: 62 cm, thickness: 3.5 cm. Photo © Trustees of the British Museum.

But the great width of the royal road in Nineveh²⁹ is certainly not indicative of its dimensions elsewhere. After all, Sennacherib had intended to ensure that communication speed was guaranteed amidst the bustle of the metropolis by significantly widening the existing facilities:

I broadened its (i.e. Nineveh's) streets for the course of the King's Road and made it (i.e. the King's Road) as bright as day. (Grayson & Novotny 2012: no. 38: 15–19)

Elsewhere, the most visible aspect of the King's Road was its post stations. The Assyrian term is *bēt mardēti*, literally “house of a route's stage.” This refers to the fact that the King's Road was organized in stages (*mardētu*) and that the post stations were situated between them in strategic positions that served also as intersections of the route network where needed. Post stations were either located within existing settlements³⁰ or constituted settlements of their own, with the necessary agricultural basis to provide for personnel, envoys, and transport animals. Whereas the caravanserais of the medieval Muslim world³¹ may serve as a convenient comparison, in that they, too, are purpose-built structures along long-distance routes providing short-term shelter and protection for travelers and their animals, the key difference is that the state-run Assyrian post stations served only the state and were not open to commercial travelers. Although no post station has yet been identified archaeologically, it is clear that we must therefore expect buildings of a relatively small scale, since there was no need for stabling large numbers of pack animals and storing great quantities of merchandise.

The Assyrian imperial communication network relied on mounted messengers, and the exclusive transport animal used for this purpose was the mule (*kūdunu*), employed in pairs.³² The second animal was undoubtedly to serve as a substitute if the first animal became exhausted, lame, or otherwise hurt. The offspring of a horse dam and a donkey sire, mules mature at five years, significantly later than both the parent animals, but they then have a longer working life of up to twenty years. Physically, they combine the body of a horse with the extremities of a donkey and often grow taller than either parent. As hybrids, mules are always infertile, as the Assyrians knew very well—this fact is the subject of an Assyrian curse:

Just as a mule has no offspring, may your name, your seed, and the seed of your sons and your daughters disappear from the land. (SAA 2 6: 537–539)

In addition to the mule's slower physical development and the need for extensive yet sensitive (and therefore expensive) training, its infertility makes it a very costly initial investment. In a debt note from 670 BC,³³ the return of a mule to the army commander responsible for it was guaranteed with the extraordinary high penalty payment of thirty minas of silver; the average price for a slave at the time

was just under one mina of silver.³⁴ Although we cannot give Assyrian prices for lack of evidence, mules were without doubt much more expensive than horses.³⁵ The fact that the Assyrian imperial mail system used pairs of mules, a good strategy to reduce the chance that the rider might be left stranded with a lame animal, doubled the cost of an already very expensive system.

We do not know how the Assyrian state procured the mules. Were they purpose-bred³⁶ or bought? The necessary early expenses were to some extent offset by the fact that mules are stronger and more resilient than horses while sharing the donkey's sure-footedness and instinct for self-preservation; they are also good swimmers. Moreover, they need less fodder than horses, as is also documented in Assyrian administrative records, albeit of c. 1200 BC.³⁷ While the Assyrian state is the first in world history to have realized the potential of mules for its purposes, the military use of this animal has continued into the present, especially in difficult terrain.³⁸

Messages exchanged between the king and his governors in the provinces and his delegates abroad were delivered either by letter or by envoy. The first method was considerably faster, as the letter was passed on in a relay system (*kalliu*) to a new courier with a fresh pair of mules after reaching a post station, enabling it to travel without delay. This may seem an obvious course of action, but the disassociation between letter and courier was in fact an innovation of the Neo-Assyrian state. The distance from the western border province of Que,³⁹ roughly corresponding to the coastal plain of modern Adana in southeastern Turkey, to the Assyrian heartland, for example, is about 700 km as the crow flies, and this corresponds closely to the actual itinerary used in the Neo-Assyrian period: it is one of the best-known stretches of the King's Road.⁴⁰ In addition to covering the sheer distance, two major and several minor rivers needed to be crossed, none of which had a bridge across it. This meant using a ferry to traverse the Euphrates at Til-Barsip and the Tigris at Nineveh, and fords at the Balikh south of Harran and across several tributaries of the Khabur between Guzana and Nasibina, lengthening the travel time significantly (Fig. 3.1). On the other hand, there are no major differences in elevation to overcome, unlike when traveling in the mountainous regions in the east and north of the Assyrian heartland. Given the implausibility of regular nocturnal travel, it is hard to imagine how a message from Que to central Assyria, even when passed on regularly to fresh riders and mules, could have been delivered in much less than five days. Nonetheless, the Neo-Assyrian relay system set the standard for communication speed for almost three millennia, until the advent of the telegraph in the Ottoman Empire in 1865.⁴¹

Whenever communication speed was not considered vital, messages could be transported by just one envoy traveling across the whole distance. In such cases, the envoy would seem to be as important as the letter, or likely even more important. Envoys were certainly the preferred means of communication whenever the message was very sensitive or when it was important that a decision could be made

on the spot. Various letters, such as the letter from crown prince Sennacherib to his father Sargon (SAA 1 31), which we will discuss in detail below, show how the Assyrian communication system routinely used the two methods side by side.

But how often and how regularly did the Assyrian officials correspond with their king? The main duty of the state officials was without doubt to act on behalf of the king wherever and whenever he himself could not be present. The officials were appointed in order to exercise power locally on behalf of the crown and, in doing so, were meant to rely on their own judgment. They therefore wrote only when they needed to involve the central administration in their decision making or in order to pass on essential information. Consequently, the bulk of their letters deals with the unexpected rather than with routine matters: opportunities arising and catastrophes unfolding, turns of events that galvanize or, on occasion, confound the wardens of the Assyrian Empire. Owing to their nature, many of the letters focus on problems, hiccups, and challenges. To ignore this when dealing with these sources will invariably result in a negative assessment of the capabilities of the Assyrian administration.

This has been the case, as it happens, with the most recent study of the imperial post system, which concludes with the statement that “my overall impression is that the Assyrian [postal] transport system was complex and not always so well organized.”⁴² This cool appraisal is mostly due to the fact that the available Assyrian letters dealing with the imperial post do not offer a comprehensive survey of the system but instead report specific problems. Given that the workings of the Assyrian post stations are mentioned only in three letters from the reign of Sargon and another from the reign of Esarhaddon addressing problems,⁴³ my interpretation would be that, on the whole, the system worked well, and that the responsibilities for its operation and maintenance were delegated in a straightforward way from the central administration to the provincial level.

Let us have a closer look at the letters from Sargon’s correspondence, from which it emerges clearly that ensuring the smooth running of the King’s Road was the duty of the governors and that maintaining the system was costly. We have already discussed one letter of Sargon’s correspondence from which these general principles have emerged (SAA 1 172). Two other letters concern specific problems, to which the responsible governors suggest solutions. The first document was written by the governor of the western province of Šubutu, centered on the Beq’a plain in Lebanon.⁴⁴ Finding the post station of Hēsa lacking in the necessary manpower to support its running, he suggested a strategy to remedy this and also nominated suitable candidates to run this post station and another at Sazanā:

To the king, my lord: your servant Bel-liqbi. Good health to the king, my lord!

The town of Hēsa, a post station (*bēt mardēti*) of mine, lacks people; the postmaster and the commander of the recruits are there alone

and cannot attend to it (properly). Now, let me get together 30 families and place them there. There are men of Nabû-ušalla the prefect living in Hēsa, a cohort of craftsmen; let him move them out, settle them in the town of Argite, and give them fields and gardens. If it is acceptable to the king, my lord, let them send a letter to the prefect Nabû-ušalla, and let me appoint (his) deputy Ia'iru as village manager there, as well as Sin-iddina, the major-domo of Adda-hati, in Sazanâ, so they will attend to these post stations and serve (literally: fear) the king. (SAA 1 177)

The other letter was the reaction of the governor of the eastern province of Arzuhina, situated to the south of the Lower Zab and bordered in the east by the Qara Dagħ mountain range,⁴⁵ to the complaint raised to the king by a royal envoy who had found the route of the King's Road leading eastward into the province of Mazamua⁴⁶ insufficiently provisioned with mules:

To the king, my lord: your servant Šamaš-bel-ušur. Good health to the king, my lord!

As to the relay postal service (*kalliu*) about which the king, my lord, wrote to me via Arbailayu: "Why isn't there any relay postal service?" When he came to me with the King's Confidant Ubru-Harran, I personally harnessed in Arzuhina prior to their arrival two mules for the use of Ubru-Harran: he took them to Arrapha. He (i.e. Ubru-Harran) harnessed two mules for the use of Arbailayu: he went on to Mazamua. Let the king, my lord, a[sk whet]her I did not station a team of [mules] in Dur-Taliti and another one in Taggalagi! When he (i.e. Arbailayu) departed from Arzuhina, there were two mules for his use from one post station (*bēt mardēti*) to another, as far as Arrakdi. When he now came, (going) to where the king, my lord, had sent him, I personally harnessed two mules in Arzuhina for [his] use as far as Dur-Taliti.

The king, my lord, knows that Arzuhina is situated at a crossroads; the stage (*mardētu*) from Arzuhina to Arrakdi is a strain for the animals. The king, my lord, should give orders that a relay postal service (*kalliu*) be set up in Dur-Atanate, so we can strengthen each other. (SAA 5 227: 1-rev. 21; the remainder of the letter deals with another matter)

The governor pointed out that his province of Arzuhina was situated at a crossroads of the King's Road, with one leg leading to the province of Arrapha (modern Kerkuk) and the other across a difficult mountain route to Mazamua. The simultaneous arrival of two envoys traveling separately in either direction resulted in a shortage of mules, possibly because the governor had not realized that they would not continue their travels together. While transport was provided for the higher-ranking of the envoys, there were apparently no mules available for the other, resulting in his complaint to the king. Arbailayu's travel plans

went ahead, but only with assistance from his higher-ranking colleague. The governor was at pains to stress that the problem was restricted to just one stage of the route network, as from the next station onward, mules had been provided to the envoy until Arrakdi, the first post station in Mazamua, had been reached, and that there had been no problem with Arbailayu's mules provision at Arzuhina during a more recent occasion.

Apart from reacting to the envoy's complaint, the governor also proposed a solution to the underlying structural problem caused by the difficulty of the route across the Qara Dagħ via the Bazyan Pass.⁴⁷ He suggested setting up an additional post station in Dur-Atanate to ensure reliable service. This proposal was indeed put into practice, as another, fragmentarily preserved letter shows.⁴⁸ The new setup is documented in the so-called Mazamua Itinerary,⁴⁹ a contemporary text which lists the sequence of post stations from Arzuhina as Dur-Atanate, Dur-Talite, Taggalagi,⁵⁰ Azari⁵¹ and then Arrakdi.

That structural problems, once identified, were resolved, as we see here and also in the first letter (SAA 1 177), would indicate to me that the imperial communication network was a flexible system that was continually monitored and adjusted in order to function as smoothly as possible. This attention, in turn, highlights just how important the system was considered for the working of the state administration.

1.4 Authorization Needed

The imperial post system was designed to allow the king and his officials all over the empire to communicate as reliably and as fast as possible. But the circle of people who were allowed to make use of this resource was severely restricted. Essentially, it was at the disposal of those who had been formally appointed to high state office. As the magnates of Assyria each received a signet ring (*unqu*) with the imperial seal showing the king killing a lion (Fig. 3.3) as a symbol of their office and as a tool to act in the king's stead,⁵² it was this universally recognizable seal they used to mark the envelopes of their state letters. This enabled all those playing a role in the transmission of their missives, such as the couriers, the personnel of the post stations, and the king's secretaries, to identify them instantly as letters of state importance and to treat them with the required attention and urgency.

More temporary, less official arrangements could place an individual who would not normally have had access to the imperial communication network in a position to make use of it. This was the case when the Babylonian scholar Mar-Issar traveled on Esarhaddon's behalf through Babylonia during the years 671–669 BC in order to reorganize the cults and civic institutions of the region. He did not hold an official state appointment and certainly lacked the imperial seal that would have gone with it, but as he was expected to communicate regularly his reports from across the country to the king, arrangements had been

made for him to use the imperial post system. This seems to have worked well as long as he operated in the cities where he and his connection to the king were known. However, in the more rural backwater of Babylonia the personnel of three post stations kept rejecting his missives, and Mar-Issar had to ask the king in a letter to have them instructed by royal order to accept his mail:

Along the roadside the (personnel) of the post stations pass my letters along from one to another (and thus) bring them to the king, my lord. (Yet) for two or three times (already) my letter has been returned from (the post stations) Kamanate, Ampihapi and [...]garešu! Let an order sealed with the imperial seal (*unqu*) be sent to them (that) they should pass my letter along from one to another and bring it to the king, my lord! (SAA 10 361: rev. 3–11)

At that time, however, Babylonia was clearly already well integrated into the imperial Assyrian communication network. This was not yet the case when Tiglath-pileser III first attempted to take direct control of the region, as emerges from one the letters in this king's correspondence, written in the Babylonian language and script and using the traditional Babylonian introduction formula:

Your servant Nabû-balassu-iqbi: I would gladly die for the king, my lord! May Nabû and Marduk bless the king, my lord! Say to the king, my lord: I am (hereby) sending my tablet to greet the king, my lord. The king, my lord, said: 'Your messenger and your report are concealed from me. Why do I send you a message, but you do not send me a reply?' I do [regularly] send my letter to the king of kings, but somebody has not allowed my messengers to go quickly to the king [but] sends them away. Ever since the (first) letter of the king has come to me I have written a reply to it and sent it to the king. (But) if somebody does not forward it, the king should not blame his servant! (SAA 19 136)

The Babylonian correspondent, an ally of the Assyrian king at an unknown Babylonian location, could not make use of the Assyrian relay postal service, which did not yet include the south of modern Iraq.⁵³ His alliance with Assyria required him to communicate regularly with the king in order to demonstrate his loyalty ("to greet the king"), but it was his responsibility to make this happen. He sent his letters with his own messengers, who were to deliver them in person to the king, but, according to this letter, this approach was not always successful. In contrast to Nabû-balassu-iqbi and other correspondents outside of the imperial post network, the Assyrian state officials did not have to worry whether or how fast their letters would reach the king: as soon as their letters were sent on their way, they held no longer any responsibility for their transportation.

1.5 Royal Letters as Public Proclamations

In contrast to the internal state correspondence, which was highly confidential, some royal letters were intended to be read out as public proclamations in front of large audiences.

This sort of communication is best attested for the reign of Assurbanipal.⁵⁴ Early in his reign, the king of Assyria and overlord of Babylonia, which was ruled by his brother Šamaš-šumu-ukin, wrote to the people of Babylon, and from the opening words of the letter he can be seen to be at pains to make it abundantly clear that the Babylonians could rely on him to respect their city's ancient privileged status:

To the people of Babylon, the men under my special protection. Thus Assurbanipal, the king of Assyria, who reveres [Marduk]. I am well, my palace is well and the realm is well. May you, great and small, be well! (ABL 926: 1–4⁵⁵)

The body of the letter is badly broken, but it is clear that the gist of the communication was similar to the message of one of his predecessors, Tiglath-pileser III, to the people Babylon, in this instance communicated through the services of two envoys who inform their king about their mission:

We spoke to the Babylonians as follows: “The k[in]g has s[en]t us to you, saying: ‘[Let me speak] with the [Babylonians] th[rough] your mouths. I shall establish [the am]ne[sty o]f Babylon and your privileged status and shall come to Babylon.’” (SAA 19 11–18).

As far as we know, there is no tradition of inscribing royal letters in stone, as the cities of the Hellenistic and Roman period did,⁵⁶ but the power relationships between monarch and local communities that emerge from the Assyrian correspondence are remarkably similar to those of later times. In Assurbanipal's case, the royal letter was meant to confirm publicly the ancient privileges of the city of Babylon, which include the inviolability of its citizens and their exemption from imperial taxation and conscription.⁵⁷ The Assyrian king obviously hoped to secure the people's goodwill in this way.

When some fifteen years later Šamaš-šumu-ukin, the king of Babylon and his brother Assurbanipal's vassal, seceded from the empire (652–648 BC), Assurbanipal frequently addressed Babylon and other southern cities and population groups in royal letters. This was clearly an integral part of a charm offensive that was conducted in parallel with the bloody war that Assyrian troops waged in the south. The intention was to strengthen the direct relationship between the Assyrian king and these communities during and in the aftermath of the rebellion. Three such letters⁵⁸ were written at different moments during the secession⁵⁹ to the people of Babylon (“The king's word

to the Babylonians”) and intended to persuade them to give their support to Assurbanipal and Assyria.

The king also wrote a number of letters to various other southern cities and communities. These letters all explicitly address “elders and common (literally, small) folk”—that is, everyone, and not just the political elites:

- The king’s word to the people of the Sealand, elders and common folk, my servants. (ABL 289: 1–2⁶⁰ ; dated to 6–ii–650 BC).
- The king’s word to the people of Raši, elders and common folk. (ABL 295: 1–2⁶¹)
- The king’s word to the people of Gambulu, elders and common folk. (ABL 293 + CT 54 484: 1–3⁶²)

In some examples, the governors, who had been appointed or confirmed by Assurbanipal, were addressed in the first instance (by name but without title, as was the Assyrian convention), but that the message was in no way exclusively meant for the governor is made abundantly clear by immediately turning to the entire community, “elders and common folk” alike:

- The king’s word to Enlil-bani and the people of Nippur, elders and common folk, my servants, however many they are. (ABL 292: 1–3⁶³)
- The king’s word to Nabû-ušabši and the people of Uruk, elders and common folk, my servants, however many they are. (ABL 297: 1–3⁶⁴)
- The king’s word to Kudurru and the people of Uruk, elders and common folk (ABL 518: 1–3; dated to 24–ii–646⁶⁵)
- The king’s word to Kudurru and the people of Uruk, elders and common folk, my servants. (ABL 296: 1–3⁶⁶)
- The king’s word to Ambappi and the people of Raši, elders and common folk. (ABL 1260: 1–3⁶⁷)

All these letters are written in Babylonian, although some⁶⁸ are written in the Neo-Assyrian rather than the Neo-Babylonian form of the cuneiform script, perhaps indicating that the person meant to read out the letter was used to that writing system and therefore an Assyrian. The speech with which the Royal Cupbearer of Sennacherib addressed the people of Jerusalem in 701 BC is given in Hebrew (2 Kings 18). The official introduced his proclamation with “Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria!” and it seems clear to me that he was reading out a royal letter. In content, it is closely comparable to Assurbanipal’s letters to the people of Babylon during the Šamaš-šumu-ukin rebellion and, like these communications, represents an attempt to charm and threaten in order to sever the loyalty between the king of Judah and his subjects.

Judging from these examples, the Assyrian kings attempted to address local communities in their own language, and this would frequently have involved the use of writing materials other than clay. Indeed, there is evidence for this also in

the form of a siege scene on a relief from Sargon's palace in Dur-Šarruken, documenting the Assyrian attack of Pazzaši in 715 BC⁶⁹ as part of a campaign against the Iranian kingdom of Mannea. The scene includes the depiction of an Assyrian officer aboard a siege engine who, in a scenario reminiscent of that described in the Bible for the siege of Jerusalem in 701 BC, addresses the defenders of the beleaguered city by reading out a document to them: as floppy as it is depicted, it is most likely a leather scroll of the sort habitually used to record non-cuneiform scripts such as Aramaic, the use of which is attested in the inscription on a stone stela found on Mannean territory, at the site of Qalaichi ("Bukan Stela").⁷⁰ We will discuss the use of Aramaic letters as part of the imperial correspondence below (section 2.2).

2 WHAT HAS SURVIVED?

The vast majority of the c. 2,000 known state letters of the Neo-Assyrian Empire were excavated at the citadel mound of Nineveh (modern Kuyunjik). However, smaller groups of texts and sometimes single tablets of the state correspondence were found elsewhere in the Empire: in Kalhu, Assur, and Dur-Šarruken in modern northern Iraq, in the royal cities of the heartland of ancient Assyria, but also in the provincial capitals Guzana in northeast Syria and Tušhan in southeast Turkey.

2.1 *The Cuneiform Tablets and their Find Contexts*

The state letters found at Nineveh were excavated in the mid-19th century on Kuyunjik and, therefore, very little was recorded about their find situation, although Julian Reade's meticulous archival work⁷¹ has shed some light on the matter of where the letters were recovered. Sadly, though, nothing much can be said about the original storage and archival organization of the state correspondence, mirroring the equally unsatisfactory case of the Records Office of the Egyptian New Kingdom capital Akhetaten (Mynářová, this volume).

But even if the find spots of the Nineveh tablets had been meticulously documented, key questions would remain open, for most of the extant correspondence of Sargon II was excavated, beyond any doubt, in Nineveh.⁷² Why is it that these letters were found in Nineveh when Sargon's political and administrative centers were first Kalhu and then, after 706 BC, Dur-Šarruken (modern Khorsabad)?

Nineveh was not the original destination of the letters. Most of them were clearly sent to Kalhu and only later transferred to Nineveh. The key questions are whether they were moved there directly or via Dur-Šarruken, and whether Sargon was responsible or his successor Sennacherib, who chose Nineveh to be the new center of the Assyrian Empire. Sargon temporarily resided in Nineveh sometime during the years 707 and 706 BC before he could move to his new city and the palace of Dur-Šarruken, and one might argue that the letters were

moved from Kalhu to Nineveh for this occasion and had not yet been moved to Dur-Šarruken when Sargon died unexpectedly in battle. But he had also spent the years 710–707 BC in Babylon, and from the letters themselves it is clear that this did not cause that city to serve as the administrative hub of the empire. Even more importantly, two letters⁷³ from Sargon's correspondence were excavated in his palace at Dur-Šarruken, proving that at least some of the letters were kept there at one point. That Sennacherib, after he became king of Assyria, had his father's correspondence moved to Nineveh, and specifically to the Southwest Palace which he totally demolished and rebuilt in the period 704–692 BC, therefore remains the most satisfying scenario. This would seem to imply that Sargon's letters were archived for future reference, but whether and how the state correspondence was accessed remains tantalizingly unclear.

In addition to the c. 1,150 letters found at Nineveh and the two letters from Dur-Šarruken, some 50 letters of Sargon's correspondence were excavated in 1952 in Kalhu (modern Nimrud) in room ZT4 of the Northwest Palace. This palace had been built by Assurnasirpal II (r. 883–859 BC) but was in use continually until the end of the Assyrian Empire in the late 7th century BC. The texts were found together with letters from the reign of Tiglath-pileser III, in total a cache of c. 200 Assyrian and c. 30 Babylonian letters.⁷⁴ According to the observations of their excavator, M. E. L. Mallowan, the letters were not found in situ but as “part of the accumulated rubbish which raised the level of the site. Indeed, we may look on this collection as the contents of a large number of ancient Assyrian waste-paper baskets which served a convenient purpose as a builders' dump.”⁷⁵ The Nimrud letters were found together with contemporary administrative documents, mostly from the reign of Sargon, dealing with taxation, conscription, and population management.⁷⁶

Although Sargon's correspondence (Fig. 3.1) represents more than half of all known letters from the Neo-Assyrian period, it is a very incomplete corpus, as we shall emphasize repeatedly in section 3. In the present context, we should stress the chronological distribution: most of those letters from Nineveh that can be dated are from the later years of Sargon's reign, whereas the texts from Kalhu date to the first five years of his rule; there is a noticeable gap for the period of around 716–711 BC. Some of the Nineveh letters can be demonstrated to originate in rooms 40–41 of the Southwest Palace,⁷⁷ and most probably all of Sargon's known Nineveh letters were stored together in this part of the palace. But as Julian Reade has noted, “The existence of a vast outer courtyard, that must have been surrounded by more government offices and residences, was not recognised [during the early excavations] and there must be plenty more tablets awaiting excavation there.”⁷⁸

The Southwest Palace of Nineveh also yielded parts of the state correspondence of Sargon's successors:⁷⁹ a few Babylonian letters from the early part of Sennacherib's reign,⁸⁰ the more exhaustive materials of Esarhaddon and

Assurbanipal (albeit with clear chronological gaps, notably for the years 662–659 BC and 655–653 BC),⁸¹ and finally six Babylonian letters of the last Assyrian king to hold Nineveh, Sin-šarru-iškun.⁸² The find location of these six documents can be reconstructed: they were excavated on the floor of Room 1 (or quite nearby).

Just one state letter can be demonstrated to have originated in the North Palace of Nineveh, which Assurbanipal had totally demolished and rebuilt in the period of c. 647–644: a Babylonian letter to Assurbanipal from c. 652.⁸³ It would seem to have been moved there from its original archival context, wherever that may have been, presumably because of its significance to Assurbanipal: it had been sent to him by his brother Šamaš-šumu-ukin, king of Babylon, at the time when he attempted to break free from Assyrian sovereignty.

In addition to the materials from the palaces of Nineveh, Kalhu, and Dur-Šarruken, a few dozen additional state letters have been found in the archives of some of the kings' correspondents. Two governors' archives have been excavated so far: the archive of Mannu-ki-mat-Aššur, the governor of Guzana (Tell Halaf in the western Khabur triangle) during the reign of Adad-nerari III,⁸⁴ and the archive of two successive governors of Kalhu during the reign of Tiglath-pileser III.⁸⁵ A royal letter sent by Assurbanipal to three members of the Assur temple administration was excavated as part of the temple archive at Assur.⁸⁶

Mention must be made also of the most recent addition to the state correspondence, a letter⁸⁷ excavated in 2002 at Tušhan (modern Ziyaret Tepe) on the Upper Tigris as part of a small archive found in a major administrative building in the lower town.⁸⁸ Addressed to the Treasurer in 611 BC by a certain Mannu-ki-Libbali, it is a cry for help on the eve of the Babylonian attack. One of the highest magnates of the Assyrian Empire, the Treasurer controlled the nearby border march in the mountain ranges on the eastern bank of the Tigris in the Turkish-Iraqi border region.⁸⁹ As commander over a key component of the Assyrian standing army, which was moreover stationed in relative vicinity to Tušhan, he would have been the obvious choice to turn to for military help.⁹⁰ The Treasurer outranked the provincial governors, who always addressed him as their superior,⁹¹ as is also the case here, and Mannu-ki-Libbali may have been the last governor of Tušhan. The letter would not seem ever to have been dispatched.

2.2 But What about Aramaic Letters?

Aramaic is a West Semitic language closely related to Phoenician and Hebrew, and, unlike its more distant relatives Assyrian and Babylonian, it was recorded in an alphabetic script.⁹² It could be scratched into stone, clay, or wax-covered tablets, but more commonly it was applied in ink on a smooth writing surface such as leather or papyrus, or on non-purpose-made materials such as potsherds (so-called ostraca). This way of writing is seen as sufficiently different from the native way of impressing a stylus into a malleable material, called *šaṭāru*, to merit its own verb, *sepēru*, in Assyrian and Babylonian.⁹³

Since the 9th century BC, Aramaic played an important role in the Assyrian state administration, as a direct consequence of the integration of the western principalities where this language was widely spoken and served for administrative purposes. The scribes who had worked for these states were incorporated into the Assyrian administration, just like their defeated armies. The use of Aramaic is documented in the Assyrian heartland from the reign of Shalmaneser III (r. 858–824 BC) onward. The best evidence is provided by the letters of the Aramaic alphabet painted on the glazed bricks of his arsenal in the capital city of Kalhu, probably as fitters' marks.⁹⁴ The earliest Assyrian depiction of a scribe writing in alphabet script with a pen on a leather scroll, alongside a cuneiform scribe with a stylus and tablet, dates to his reign, too, and can be found in a scene on one of the decorated bronze bands⁹⁵ holding together the wooden doors of the temple in Imgur-Ellil (modern Balawat) in the Assyrian heartland. The two scribes seem to record the tribute of the king of Unqu (as identified by a cuneiform caption), one of the western vassal states of Assyria, as it is being brought before king Shalmaneser. Similar depictions of the pair of scribes are common in Assyrian palace decorations of the 8th and 7th centuries BC, always in the administrative context of registering spoils of war, booty, or tribute.⁹⁶

But whereas Aramaic was used as a matter of course in the Assyrian administration, it seems that it was not deemed acceptable for the state correspondence, at least during the reign of Sargon II. This emerges unequivocally from an exchange between this Assyrian king and Sin-iddina, his correspondent in the Babylonian city of Ur, as documented in Sargon's reply. After quoting Sin-iddina's suggestion to write in Aramaic, the very idea is demolished:

'If it is acceptable to the king, let me write and send my messages to the king on Aramaic documents': Why would you not write and send me messages in Babylonian⁹⁷? Really, the message which you write in it must be drawn up in this very manner—this is a fixed regulation! (SAA 17 2: 15–22)

These instructions refer to the format of the letter in which they are contained: a clay tablet of the typical letter shape, inscribed in cuneiform script and the Babylonian language. It is worth stressing that Sargon did not expect Sin-iddina, or any of his other Babylonian correspondents, to address him in Assyrian. The use of the Babylonian language was acceptable and, as this letter indicates, even expected and required. The Assyrian kings even habitually wrote their own letters to Babylonian recipients in Babylonian, as is the case in this letter.⁹⁸ Elsewhere, I have argued that this is part of a wider Assyrian strategy in the south that sought to restore and preserve long-established cultural traditions.⁹⁹ Sargon's directive is therefore less an assault against the use of Aramaic as an epistolary language than a conscious strengthening of the traditional native writing system.

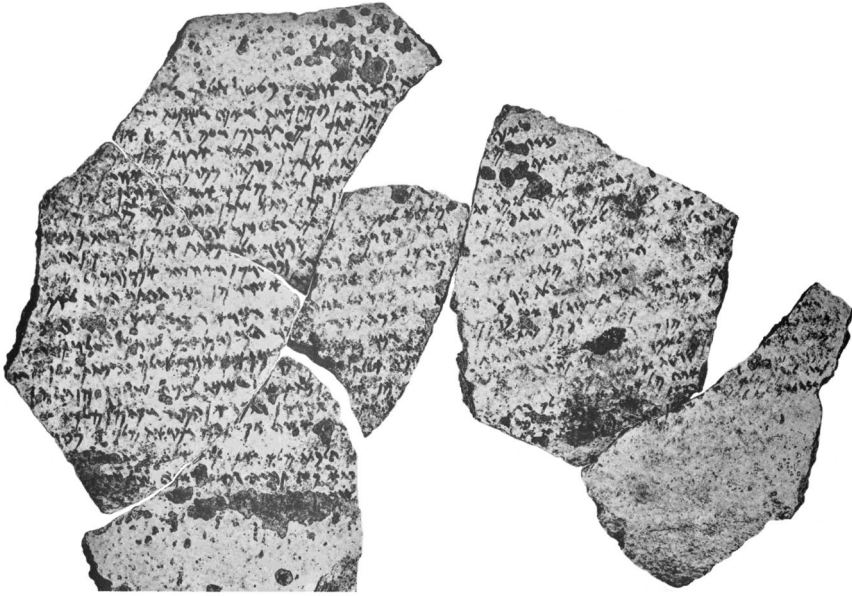


FIGURE 3.5. *The Assur Ostrakon. Vorderasiatisches Museum Berlin, VA 8384. Photo reproduced from Lidzbarski 1921: pl. 1.*

One cannot, however, exclude the notion that other Assyrian rulers were far less dogmatic about the use of Aramaic as an epistolary language.¹⁰⁰ In an attempt to explain why there is considerably less cuneiform material available of the state correspondence of the 7th century, Simo Parpola¹⁰¹ postulated that Sargon's successors permitted their correspondents the use of Aramaic (and that the resulting leather documents did not survive). There is some support for this view in the shape of the so-called Assur Ostrakon (Fig. 3.5). This Aramaic letter, the only one surviving from the Assyrian Empire, was not written on a leather document but on a large potsherd.¹⁰² It is not part of the royal correspondence, but its content concerns political and military matters c. 650 BC, and the correspondents were certainly Assyrian officials in the service of king Assurbanipal. There is repeated mention of letters being written and sent, including one to the king (l. 6), and while there is no indication of these letters' script and language, the sheer existence of the Assur Ostrakon itself makes it difficult to argue that they all must have been clay tablets inscribed in cuneiform. Why are there not more Aramaic ostraca known from the Neo-Assyrian period? I would argue that such texts are usually not recognized during excavations. The Assur Ostrakon is uncommonly big and therefore attracted attention upon its recovery (nonetheless, more than a third of it was lost during the excavation), but smaller ostraca look just like ordinary potsherds before they are cleaned and would not stand out

at all when excavated. Pottery fragments, of which excavations yield hundreds and even thousands, are usually soaked in water and then scrubbed clean with a brush in order to free them of dirt for further processing (drawing, photography, etc.)—but such treatment is certain to rinse off the water-soluble plant-based ink used for writing Aramaic at the time.¹⁰³

Other than in the exchange with Sîn-iddina, there seems to be only one explicit reference in the royal correspondence to a letter in Aramaic (*e-gír-tú ar-me-tú*) that has been handed over to the king.¹⁰⁴ Unfortunately, this fragmentary letter is of unclear date: the reference to Aššur-daʾin-aplu son of Shalmaneser (III)—the crown prince who led an unsuccessful rebellion late in his father's reign—seems to place it in the later 9th or very early 8th century BC, which would make it the oldest specimen from the known royal correspondence. This dating is not impossible, of course, especially as the letters of the governor of Guzana (modern Tell Halaf, see above) from the reign of Adad-nerari III are not much younger. The reference leaves it entirely open where this Aramaic letter originated, which may have been outside of Assyria. In any case, one can easily argue that the fact that the letter is specifically said to be in Aramaic indicates that this was considered unusual in an Assyrian context at the time.

3 MECHANISMS OF COMMUNICATION ACCORDING TO SARGON'S STATE LETTERS

Let us now focus on the state correspondence of Sargon of Assyria (r. 721–705 BC), which is by far the largest sub-corpus available to us: c. 1,200 letters are known. But this is only a relatively small part of the original corpus. On one hand, many of these clay tablets are in a fragmentary state and sizable portions of the original text are missing. On the other hand, it is obvious that very many letters have been lost. We have already commented on the chronological gaps in the material, but there are also many letters missing from well-documented dossiers.

3.1 *Case Study: The Correspondence of an Imperial Delegate*

Our case study will be the correspondence of and pertaining to the Assyrian delegate (*qēpu*)¹⁰⁵ at Kumme, Aššur-rešuwa. As the representative of Sargon's interests in the small mountain state in the upper stretches of the Iraqi Khabur,¹⁰⁶ Aššur-rešuwa frequently sent letters to his king, at least eleven of which survive in the original.¹⁰⁷ From these texts it is clear that the frequency of communications reflects need and necessity rather than a regular pattern of correspondence: there are no routine letters that would serve no other purpose than to reassure the center that everything is in order. This holds generally true for the correspondence

of officials. Aššur-rešuwa also wrote letters to the Treasurer ʿab-šar-Aššur, of which two survive.¹⁰⁸ In the first of these letters, he stated explicitly his intention to post the same information in a separate letter to the “palace,” but this letter has not survived. In turn, the Treasurer reported the content of the letters received from Aššur-rešuwa to the king.¹⁰⁹ To reiterate (cf. section 2.1), the Treasurer was in charge of an eponymous border march, the “Province of the Treasurer,” which encompassed the mountainous lands east of the Tigris in what is today the Iraqi-Turkish border region,¹¹⁰ and he was therefore Kumme’s next-door neighbor. Dispatching a message to the Treasurer while he was in his province would have been relatively easy for Aššur-rešuwa to arrange, while sending a letter to the royal court, then based at Kalhu, required a much longer journey. The Treasurer could react and, if necessary, intervene much faster than the more distant king; but clearly Aššur-rešuwa deemed it necessary to communicate directly with his monarch.

The two letters sent by Aššur-rešuwa to the Treasurer have survived as part of the royal archive. They are among a tiny group of Neo-Assyrian state letters that are not addressed to the king. Why are these documents in the royal archive, rather than in the Treasurer’s own in his (as of now unidentified and therefore unexplored) residence city of Kibšuna? While the topics covered by the extant correspondence show that this official indeed spent much of his time in his border march, they also indicate that he was at least temporarily in charge of the construction works at Sargon’s new capital in Dur-Šarruken, which would have required him to stay in central Assyria and receive letters there. Perhaps this is how Aššur-rešuwa’s letters ended up in the royal correspondence. Alternatively, the Treasurer may have forwarded them to the king, a practice attested in contemporary letters (see below).

In his own documents, Aššur-rešuwa stated that he had received letters both from the king¹¹¹ and from the Treasurer.¹¹² None of the original sources is known, and this is to be expected because these letters would have been kept in the recipient’s archive, in Aššur-rešuwa’s case at Kumme. The two governors’ archives from Guzana and Kalhu (see above, section 2.1) include letters sent by the king and by other governors, illustrating, just as Aššur-rešuwa’s correspondence does, that Assyrian state communication was not exclusively directed toward the king but also took place between state officials. The best illustration for this is a letter of king Adad-nerari III addressed to the governor of Našibina (modern Nusaybin) in the eastern part of Khabur triangle with instructions to pass it on to the governor of Guzana, the province bordering on Našibina to the west,¹¹³ which was excavated in the latter’s archive:

The king’s word to Ilumma-le’i (i.e., governor of Našibina).

Six teams of horses per town are to be ready for the king in (all) your towns on the 10th day of the 2nd month. Take the sealed document (i.e.,

this very letter) and bring it to Mannu-ki-Aššur (i.e., governor of Guzana); make (him) levy accordingly in his towns. (Friedrich et al. 1940: no. 1)

Aššur-rešuwa also corresponded with the crown prince, Sennacherib, as is known from quotes in the latter's letters to his royal father which sum up the delegate's reports from Kumme. It is possible that Sennacherib received these letters not in person but as his father's regent in the Assyrian heartland, a role he fulfilled whenever the king was absent, most notably in the period 709–707 BC, when Sargon resided in Babylon. When Aššur-rešuwa talks in one of his letters¹¹⁴ about writing to the palace rather than specifically the king, he may well refer to this scenario.

In one of his letters to Sargon with extracts from Aššur-rešuwa's letters,¹¹⁵ Sennacherib also passed on information received from Ariye, the ruler of Kumme, to monitor whose activities the Assyrian delegate was charged. While Aššur-rešuwa corresponded by letter, Ariye communicated by messenger, at least in this instance. In a second letter of the crown prince to the king,¹¹⁶ a letter of Aššur-rešuwa is quoted which in turn refers to an earlier letter dispatched by the delegate. Neither of these missives survives in the original.

It will be abundantly clear by now just how patchy the available corpus is. That previous letters were habitually quoted in lengthy passages is extremely helpful in reconstructing the lost "paper" trail and somewhat compensates for the fact that only a very modest number of letters sent by the king has survived.¹¹⁷ But whether the extant texts are drafts, archival copies, or originals that were never sent remains tantalizingly unclear.¹¹⁸ While gaps in the existing dossiers can therefore be reconstructed to some extent, we must stress just how limited and uneven the geographical distribution of the known Sargon letters is. Not all regions of the empire are represented. The most prominent gap exists in regard to materials from the western parts of the empire, from which only very few letters survive (Fig. 3.1); this is also reflected by the distribution of identifiable place names mentioned in the letters (Fig. 3.6).

3.2 Multiple Streams of Information

In addition to highlighting the unevenness of the surviving records, the example of the Kummean correspondence also serves to emphasize the sheer scale of the Assyrian state communication. Information was habitually sent to several correspondents—and not just the king!—who often preferred to rely on multiple informants rather than just one source. One of the reports of Sennacherib to the king makes this especially clear and deserves to be quoted in full:

To the king, my lord: your servant Sennacherib. Good health to the king, my lord! Assyria is well, the temples are well, all the king's forts are well. The king, my lord, can be glad indeed.

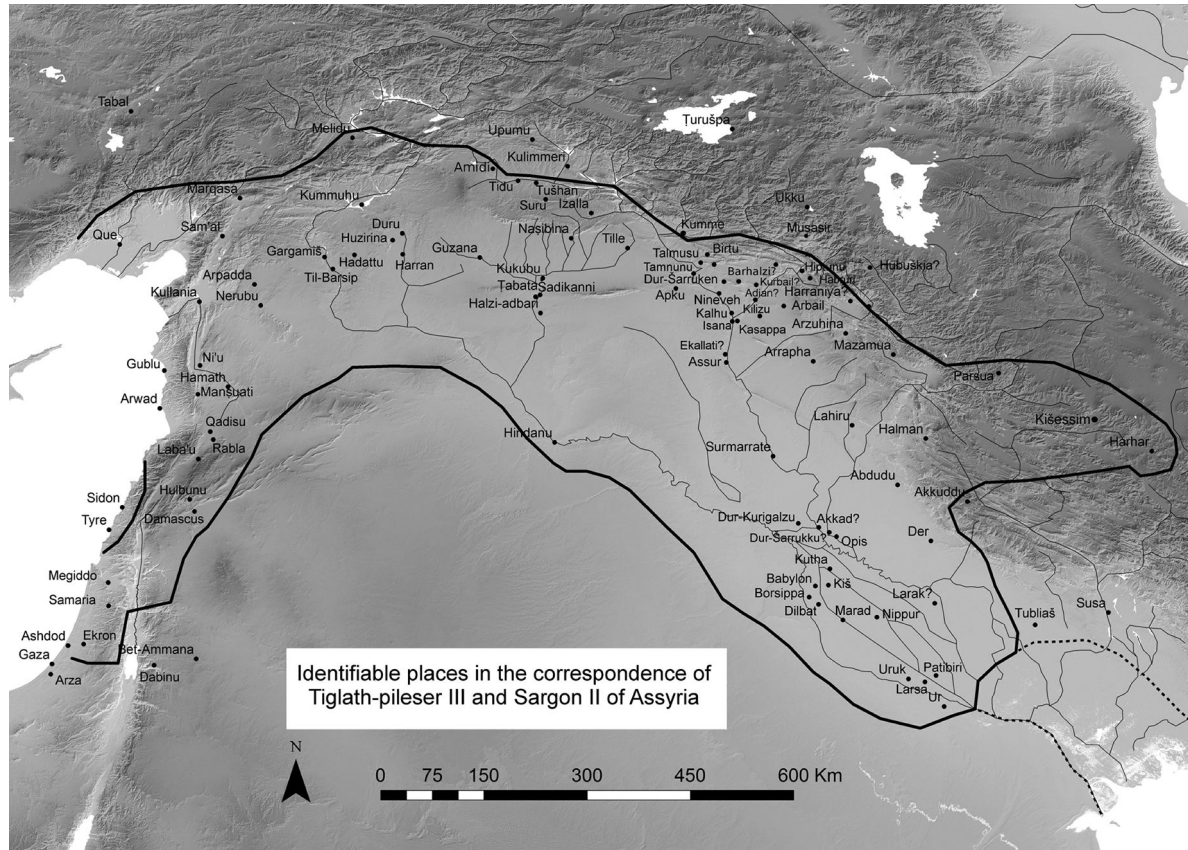


FIGURE 3.6. Map of the Assyrian Empire illustrating the distribution of identifiable place names in the correspondence of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II of Assyria. Map by Alessio Palmisano, after a sketch by the author.

The ruler of Ukku has sent me (this message): “The troops of the king of Urarṭu have been utterly defeated on his expedition against the Cimmerians; eleven of his governors have been eliminated [with] their troops; his commander-in-chief and two of his governors [have been taken prisoners]. He (himself) managed to flee [to Manne]a. [...]” [This] was the report of the ruler of Ukku.

Aššur-rešuwa has written to me thus: “The previous report which I sent about the Urarṭians was that they had suffered a terrible defeat. Now his (i.e., the king of Urarṭu’s) country is quiet again and each of his magnates has gone to his province. Kaqqadanu, his commander-in-chief, has been taken prisoner; the king of Urarṭu is in the province of Wazaun.” This was the report of Aššur-rešuwa.

Nabû-le’i, the governor of Birtu, has written to me: “I have written to the guards of the forts along the border concerning the news of the king of Urarṭu and they (tell me this): ‘His troops have been utterly defeated on his expedition against the Cimmerians. Three of his magnates along with their troops have been killed; he himself has escaped and entered his country, but his army has not yet arrived (back).’” This was the report of Nabû-le’i.

The ruler of Muṣaṣir and his brother and son have gone to an audience with the king of Urarṭu; the messenger of the (ruler) of Hubuškia has also gone to an audience with him—the guards of all the forts along the border have sent reports like this.

From the country of Tabal, they have brought me a letter from Nabû-le’i, the major-domo of Ahat-abiša. I am herewith forwarding it to the king, my lord. (SAA 1 31)

Let us first consider the last passage, a postscript to the main message concerning events in Urarṭu. Sennacherib mentions that he is sending on a letter received from Tabal where his sister Ahat-abiša, Sargon’s daughter, lives as the wife of the Assyrian client king Ambaris. There are other examples of this practice, such as this reference to reports on a meeting between two Assyrian enemies of state, the kings of Karalla and Mannea that the governor of Mazamua sent on to the king:

I have forwarded the letters of Nabû-hamatua to Nineveh, and they will have read them to the king. (SAA 5 218: 11–16)

Neither these letters nor the letter from Tabal have been found. But only letters considered very important seem to have been forwarded to the king in the original. More commonly, letters were quoted, as we see in the main part of our letter where Sennacherib communicates extracts from three letters. They all cover the same event, the disastrous defeat of the Urarṭian forces in a battle

against the Cimmerians. His sources are the ruler of Ukku, an Assyrian client king who also maintained diplomatic relations with the Urartian court; the already familiar delegate Aššur-rešuwa who was stationed at the client kingdom of Kumme, Ukku's western neighbor; and the governor of the Assyrian province of Birtu¹¹⁹ which was situated in the region of Zakho on the lower stretches of the Iraqi Khabur, just downstream from Kumme. Incidentally, we see here three very different participants of the Assyrian Empire in action: the last is a governor, appointed by the king to administrate a province that formed part of the Assyrian state. The first is a client ruler, bound to Sargon by treaty and therefore considered "under the yoke of Aššur,"¹²⁰ and the second is the delegate appointed by Sargon and dispatched to his posting abroad to keep a close eye on the client ruler, as perhaps best illustrated by the stipulations in the treaty between Assyria and Tyre.¹²¹

While the data communicated by these three sources broadly matches in that the Urartian defeat is described as catastrophic there are significant discrepancies in the three reports: it makes a difference whether three or eleven of the governors and their army contingents have been wiped out or whether the army is still stranded abroad or safely back at home. Additional letters in the available corpus add to the plurality of voices: a fragmentary letter offers yet another version of the story, reporting the demise of all governors and their army contingents:

[When] the ruler of Urartu [w]ent [against the Cimmerians, a]ll [his governors and his troops] were kil[led; n]ot [one] has returned [from there].
(SAA 5 174: 2'-5')

And another report provides detailed information which again does not match any of the other known versions:

[Nine] of his [gov]ernors were kil[led: the gover]nor opposite the chief cupbe[arer, the gove]rnor opposite us, the governor opposite Ša-Aššur-dubbu, the governor opposite Mušašir, the governor of Wazae, the governor of Šibtu[r]u, two governors opposite Kar-siparri, the governor of Šattera—in all nine governors of his were killed. Their king, however, escaped secretly on a lone horse and took to the mountains. The rear parts of the camp did not see their [ki]ng and did [not] realize that he had sa[ved himself]. [So they lif]ted up Melar[tua] and [ma]de him king [along] the road. (SAA 5 90: 5'-rev. 9¹²²)

Which of the five available versions of the outcome of the battle between Urartians and Cimmerians is the most reliable? Even the contemporary readers will have found it hard to decide. Significantly, Sennacherib did not comment on the three reports and their reliability when he passed them on to his father. His communication is a valuable reminder to the modern historian that third party

information reported in letters should always be treated with caution. This is of course also the reason why the state administration prefers to rely on multiple data streams. Moreover, all correspondents were clearly aware of the fact that they were but one source of information and this alone will have ensured that they attempted to stick to factual information and limit gossip and hearsay to a minimum.

Sennacherib concludes the account on Urarṭu with reports on imminent personal encounters between the Urarṭian ruler and some of his client kings or their representatives. As these client kings also maintained diplomatic relations with Assyria they would have been expected to report back to Sargon on these meetings. In very sensitive matters, informants might insist on speaking directly with the king, rather than with his officials. This is the case in a letter sent to Sargon by Nabû-uṣalla, the governor of the Assyrian province of Tamnunu,¹²³ situated east of the Tigris in the region of the modern Eski Mosul Dam.

To the king, my lord: your servant Nabû-uṣall[a]. Good health to the king, my lord!

Three powerful men of the Kummeans have come and had an audience with me and Mar-Issar, the King's Confidant (*ša-qurbūti*). Here is what they said to me: "Our people may go where the king says, but your messenger should take us to the palace. There is a matter [concerning] another country we (wish to) discuss [in] the king's [pres]ence. [...] We [will] not tell it to you, [n]or will we tell it to the royal bodyguard. Else if you do not take us to the Palace, sooner or later we shall say to the king: 'We spoke with the governor and the King's Confidant, but they did not agree to bring us to the Palace.'"—What are the king my lord's orders? (SAA 5 104)

Here, the dignitaries from Kumme refused to disclose their news, most likely about Urarṭu, to the governor and one of the King's Confidants who happened to be with the governor. Both were high-ranking officials who could expect to enjoy the king's full trust. The King's Confidants specifically were a select group of men who are very frequently attested as the king's special envoys,¹²⁴ regularly entrusted with the delivery of information that was considered too sensitive to be committed to writing.

IN CONCLUSION

The attitude displayed by the Kummeans illustrates the importance of confidentiality. It also provides us with a final opportunity to rank the means of communications in the Assyrian Empire. These are: the personal encounter between the bearer of news and the intended recipient; the use of a trusted envoy as an

intermediary who delivered the oral message in person; and finally, the sealed letter.

The letter was the least personal option but by virtue of the innovative relay postal system held the advantage of speed, crucial for ensuring cohesion and control in a trans-regional state like Assyria that was active from the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf to the regions beyond the Zagros and the Taurus main ridges. This administrative innovation may well constitute Assyria's most important contribution to the art of government and became a standard tool in the administration of empires.

The Lost State Correspondence of the Babylonian Empire as Reflected in Contemporary Administrative Letters

Michael Jursa¹

THE Neo-Babylonian Empire (Fig. 4.1) dominated a large part of the Middle East from 612 BC, after the final defeat of its Assyrian rival, until 539 BC, when it fell at the hands of the Persians under Cyrus the Great. Compared to the cases of its Assyrian predecessor and its Persian successor state, the overall evaluation of this empire is hampered by the extremely uneven distribution of the sources. While we have a far better understanding of the socio-economic development in the imperial center of southern Babylonia than for any other Near Eastern state of the first millennium BC, we know far less about the administrative structures both in the center and in the periphery and about the nature of Babylonian imperial control over its subject territories. Tellingly, the only monographic attempt to write a political history of the Neo-Babylonian Empire was a doctoral thesis (von Voigtlander 1963) which was never published as a book.² This necessitates historians to draw not only on contemporary sources but also on comparative data from earlier and later periods of Mesopotamian history.

This chapter attempts to approximate how the Babylonian kings conducted their state correspondence, which, unlike the Assyrian state letters (Radner, this volume), has not been recovered so far. The fact that we know that at least part of this correspondence was conducted in Aramaic (see section 1) means that we cannot rely on hoping for its miraculous discovery. Instead, we must utilize the letters of the temple correspondence that have survived in significant numbers and also elucidate communication with the king. After a brief survey of the administrative structure of the Babylonian Empire, we will turn to the testimony of the temple letters, mining this corpus for letters written by the king and addressed to the king, before focusing our attention on the personal encounter with the king on the occasion of audiences and royal visits. The extant material relates to Nabopolassar (r. 626–605 BC), Nebuchadnezzar (r. 604–562 BC), and Nabonidus (r. 555–539 BC).

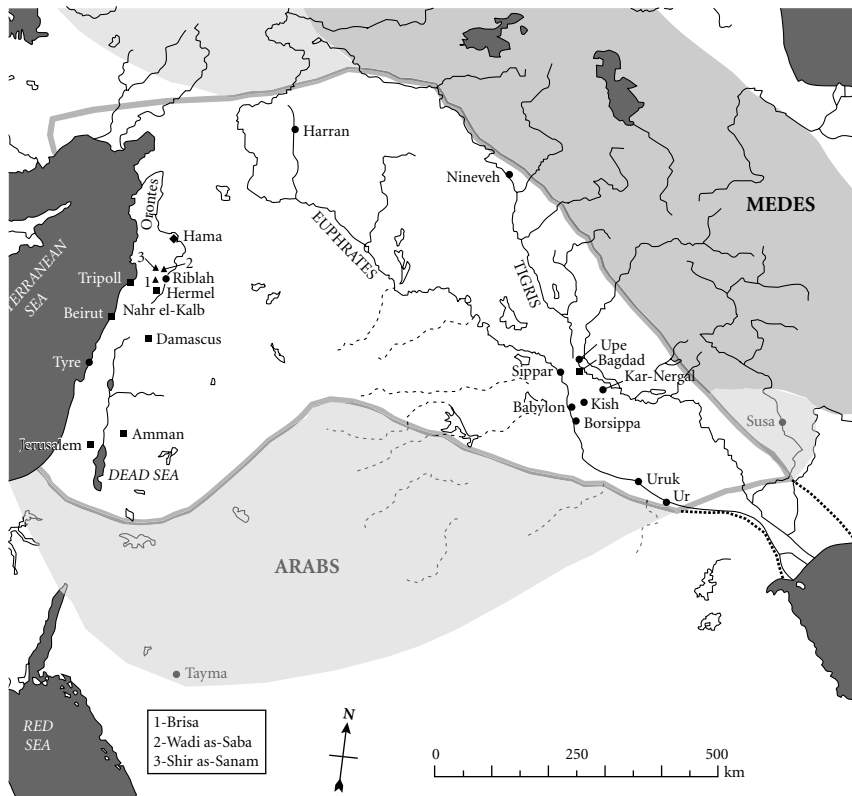


FIGURE 4.1. Map indicating the maximum extent of the Babylonian Empire and the sites mentioned in the text. The shaded areas in the Arab desert and around Susa are contested regions under partial control of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. The dark gray area is under Median control while the lighter area in Anatolia may be partially under Median influence. Adapted from Da Riva 2012: 15 by Alessio Palmisano, after a sketch of the author.

1 THE NEO-BABYLONIAN EMPIRE: THE KING AND THE DELEGATION OF POWER

At first glance, the structure of the Neo-Babylonian Empire³ was that of a typical ancient Near Eastern monarchy of the Iron Age; this applies to its institutions and administration, especially in the imperial core in southern Mesopotamia. Conceptually, the supreme political power was vested in the king, who derived his legitimacy from the fact that he acted as the gods' vicar on earth. The royal ideology of the period differed markedly from the prevalent image projected, for example, by the Assyrian king. Ideally, a Neo-Babylonian king wanted to be seen "not as conqueror, administrator, or provider of social justice, but as religious leader and teacher of wisdom."⁴ This image was created and projected by

the royal inscriptions and the curriculum of the scribal schools, which focused strongly on the figure of the king and the greatness of the capital, Babylon,⁵ being aimed squarely at a Babylonian urban audience. In the recently conquered western parts of the empire, in contrast, the iconographic language of kingship, best documented in rock reliefs such as those at Wadi Brisa in Lebanon, was based on Neo-Assyrian precedents and thereby implicitly claimed the legitimacy of the Babylonians' imperial predecessors.⁶

The predominance of the royal persona as projected by the various media of royal self-expression notwithstanding, the monarchy was in actual fact but one of three distinct elements whose interaction and shifting balance of power defined the structure of the Babylonian state in its core throughout its history in the first millennium BC, including the imperial phase. The other two elements were, first, the old Babylonian cities of the southern Mesopotamian alluvium and, second, the Chaldean and Aramean tribes, especially those settled east of the Tigris.⁷ Ethnic subdivisions had important political as well as social implications for the Neo-Babylonian Empire. In the social sphere this is apparent from the considerable care with which urban Babylonians kept themselves segregated from the surrounding Aramean part of society.⁸ Because they appear rarely in the written sources, the role of the tribes is generally not emphasized enough in treatments of Babylonian history of the 6th century BC⁹; the bias of the extant documentation is owed to its origin in a Babylonian urban milieu. For the 7th century, however, the Assyrian state correspondence concerning Babylonia attests to the decisive role of the tribes in Babylonian politics at that time.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the tribes' role appears clearly in a unique source from 598 BC which illustrates well the tripartite structure of the state: a building inscription of Nebuchadnezzar known as his *Hofkalender*.¹¹

This text enumerates in an appendix to the traditionally phrased building inscription the chief dignitaries of the state who symbolically contributed to the construction of a palace built by Nebuchadnezzar. These dignitaries can be divided into the palace officials, the men forming the king's entourage; the governors of provinces and tribal areas; and the officials in charge of the Babylonian cities of the alluvium. These three groups represent the three principal subdivisions of the Neo-Babylonian Empire as set out above.

In the 8th and 7th centuries BC, many kings of Babylon had been of tribal origin—Chaldean or Aramean—rather than of urban Babylonian origin.¹² Also in the time of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, the tribes maintained their claim to central power. Nabopolassar, the first king of the Babylonian Empire, can with some plausibility be identified as the Assyrian governor of the southern city of Uruk. He was the descendant of an important local family that had a tradition of serving the Assyrians; at the same time, he may have had a non-Babylonian tribal connection, at least in the eyes of contemporaries from northern Babylonia who connect him with the Dakkuru, one of the Chaldean tribes.¹³ Neriglissar

(r. 559–556), who toppled Nabopolassar's grandson and second successor Amel-Marduk (r. 561–560) and took the crown for himself, was the son of the leader of the Aramean Puqudu tribe. He may have also been the son-in-law of Nabopolassar's son and successor Nebuchadnezzar: evidence for an alliance between the Puqudu and the Dakkuru tribes.¹⁴ Nabonidus, the final king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, who had taken the throne from Neriglissar's son Labaši-Marduk (r. 556 BC, for three months), had been a military leader and a follower of Nebuchadnezzar, while his father had attached himself to the rising star of Nabopolassar. Also in this case, an Aramaic or Chaldean rather than an urban Babylonian background is virtually certain.¹⁵

The ethnicity of the Neo-Babylonian royal houses is important for our present topic because of the implications regarding the mechanisms of communication within the empire. It is probably for this reason that the royal administration relied more strongly on Aramaic scribes and Aramaic as an administrative language than did traditional Babylonian institutions such as the temples, which have produced the bulk of the documentation that has survived. Most of the Aramaic scribes (*sēpiru*) that are attested before the fall of the Babylonian Empire are in fact demonstrably members of the royal administration.¹⁶ In many cases, an Aramaic (or at least bilingual) background of a royal official may remain hidden behind a conventional Babylonian name and the equally conventional Babylonian documentation, but we find such an identity suggestively revealed in an exceptional case of code-switching, where the royal official Nabû-ahu-iddin (a Babylonian name) inserts an Aramaic curse ("By the gods!") in an emotional letter written in Babylonian.¹⁷ The administration of the Neo-Babylonian Empire was undoubtedly bilingual—as was that of the Neo-Assyrian empire (Radner, this volume)—even though the available documentation in cuneiform writing, which originates predominantly in an exclusively Babylonian urban context, reflects this fact only indirectly.

As an empire, the Neo-Babylonian state was in essence an incidental heir of its Assyrian predecessor. The "emic" view of the geographical subdivisions of the empire appears clearly in some of Nebuchadnezzar's inscriptions.¹⁸ These texts distinguish three regions: the Sealand in the south of Babylonia, the core area of Chaldean settlement; the land of Akkade, central and northern Babylonia including regions east of the Tigris, with some tribal regions (Aramean Puqudu and Chaldean Bit-Amukanu) and the most important old cities (Babylon, Borsippa, Nippur, Cutha and Sippar); and the land of Assyria, north and east of Akkade. Beyond these regions, which delimit the traditional boundaries of Mesopotamia, the vision of Nebuchadnezzar's inscriptions becomes vague. The king speaks of the "kings on the other side of the river (Euphrates) (and) the governors of the land of Hatti (i.e. northern Syria)" and of "kings in distant regions" in the midst of the Upper and the Lower Sea (the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf) over whom he ruled. This suggests that the periphery of the empire consisted of an

irregular network of regions (“provinces”) under direct Babylonian government and of semi-independent vassal states that owed tribute.

Owing to a lack of pertinent sources, the exact nature of the dominance of Babylonia over its imperial periphery is debated. Some scholars assume that Babylonian control amounted to little more than regular incursions of the army into Syria and the Levant, aimed at the collection of tribute; others point to evidence that suggests a more stable and generally less destructive role of Babylonian rule in the west.¹⁹

In contrast to the uncertainties regarding control over the periphery, the imperial core of the Neo-Babylonian Empire definitely exhibits the structure of a patrimonial-bureaucratic state.²⁰ Its legal-rational or bureaucratic component, in particular on the lower rungs of the administrative hierarchy, was of considerable strength, implying standardization of rule-bound procedures. Nevertheless, patrimonial ties of patronage and dependency regulated the interplay of the overlapping and not always well circumscribed areas of competence and responsibility of the office-holding elites on the middle and higher rungs of the administrative and social hierarchies of the Neo-Babylonian Empire.²¹ The discussion of the patterns of communication between the king and his administration and other institutions of government have to be seen within this general framework of a (shifting) tension between rule-bound standardized procedure and personalized negotiation on all levels of administration, wherever the king’s power was exercised or delegated.

2 APPROXIMATING THE LOST STATE CORRESPONDENCE: THE TESTIMONY OF THE TEMPLE LETTERS

Written sources for the Neo-Babylonian Empire come mostly from Mesopotamia and are written in the cuneiform script. There are also non-cuneiform sources in Greek and Hebrew, and they have been very influential in determining the modern assessment of the Neo-Babylonian state. These include some disjointed (and frequently unreliable) passages in Greek historiography, such as the works of Herodotus²² and Berossus, whose important work is unfortunately preserved only in fragments.²³ And of course there is the Bible.²⁴ While its factual contribution to the reconstruction of the pertinent historical events is limited, its account of the destruction of the kingdom of Judah at the hands of the Babylonian army has been exceedingly influential in shaping opinions on the Babylonian Empire.

The Babylonian sources give much detailed information about the economic and social history of the imperial core in southern Mesopotamia in this period, thanks to tens of thousands of clay tablets of administrative and legal content.²⁵ These texts allow a reconstruction of the economic structures of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, at least in its core, in considerable detail, and

demonstrate the economic consequences of imperial rule.²⁶ On the other hand, we lack state archives of the kind that have been found in Assyrian Nineveh and that throw so much light on the history of the Neo-Assyrian Empire.²⁷

The cuneiform sources dating to the period of the Neo-Babylonian empire can be categorized as follows. First, there are the royal inscriptions, a large corpus,²⁸ but quite formulaic in content and nature: the kings are depicted as pious and sage vicars of the gods, and there is very little information on political and administrative matters. Second, we have archival texts—that is, administrative documents, contracts, notes, lists, letters, and the like. There are now around 16,000 published texts, and many more in museums and other collections that still await publication. About 1,100 of these texts are letters,²⁹ fewer than 160 of which are from private archives while the majority, about 920 texts, represent official correspondence from temple archives. Overall, there are some 1,750 letters from the “long 6th century,” including the first decades of the Persian period.³⁰ It is not always possible to decide whether a particular letter is to be assigned to the Neo-Babylonian or to the Persian period; for this reason, the figures given here are only approximate.

For the present purpose of attempting to elucidate the role of communications in the cohesion of the Neo-Babylonian state, we must draw nearly exclusively on the letters found in the temple archives of the Ebabbar temple of Sippar in northern Babylonia and of the Eanna temple of Uruk in the south of the region. In addition, some relevant isolated material includes letters from Babylon and Borsippa, both in northern Babylonia. The temple letters can be divided into internal and external correspondence: letters exchanged among members of the temple household, and letters received by temple officials from members of other (state) institutions. Letters sent to the outside world, in contrast, are only rarely preserved, as copies of letters were made only in exceptional circumstances.

2.1 Royal Letters

Within this corpus, several royal letters are preserved. The kings, as a rule, do not give their names, but nevertheless it is nearly always possible to determine the identity of the sender on the basis of the prosopography of the addressees. Invariably, these are high-ranking temple administrators and priests.

The pertinent texts have been collected in Table 4.1. None of them is dated, as is the convention for letters, but two letters³¹ can be attributed to specific years on the basis of their contents. Otherwise, datings can be roughly determined in reference to the periods when the officials receiving the letters held their appointments. These, however, may fall into the reigns of several kings, in which case the identification of the royal sender is not entirely certain. This is why some of the letters are listed as being addressed to “Nabopolassar or Nebuchadnezzar,” with the latter’s first regnal years as king of Babylon offering a possible alternative to the reign of his father and predecessor.

Table 4.1. Neo-Babylonian royal letters.

Npl = Nabopolassar; *Nbk* = Nebuchadnezzar; *Nbn* = Nabonidus.

Text	Addressees	Office period
<i>Nabopolassar or Nebuchadnezzar</i>		
BM 118097	Nabû-nadin-šumi <i>šatammu</i>	15 Npl-3 Nbk
YOS 21 1	Nabû-nadin-šumi <i>šatammu</i>	15 Npl-3 Nbk
SMUI 1913-14.1508	Nadin < <i>šatammu</i> >	15 Npl-3 Nbk
YOS 3 3	Ninurta-šarru-ušur <i>qīpu</i>	16 Npl-26 Nbk
	Nabû-nadin-šumi <i>šatammu</i>	15 Npl-3 Nbk
	Marduk-eṭer <i>ṭupšar ayakki</i>	15 Npl-7 Nbk
Smith 1926: 443-445	Ninurta-šarru-ušur <i>qīpu</i>	16 Npl-26 Nbk
	Nabû-nadin-šumi <i>šatammu</i>	15 Npl-3 Nbk
	Marduk-eṭer <i>ṭupšar ayakki</i>	15 Npl-7 Nbk
TCL 9 139	Ninurta-šarru-ušur <i>qīpu</i>	16 Npl-26 Nbk
	Nabû-nadin-šumi <i>šatammu</i>	15 Npl-3 Nbk
	Marduk-eṭer <i>ṭupšar ayakki</i>	15 Npl-7 Nbk
YOS 3 5	Ninurta-šarru-ušur <i>qīpu</i>	16 Npl-26 Nbk
<i>Nebuchadnezzar as crown prince under Nabopolassar</i>		
TCL 9 99	Ninurta-šarru-ušur <i>qīpu</i>	Datable 610 BC
	Nabû-nadin-šumi <i>šatammu</i>	
	Marduk-eṭer <i>ṭupšar ayakki</i>	
YOS 3 1	Ninurta-šarru-ušur <i>qīpu</i>	Datable c. 607 BC
	Nadin <i>šatammu</i>	
	Marduk-eṭer <i>ṭupšar ayakki</i>	
<i>Nabonidus</i>		
YOS 3 2	Kurbanni-Marduk <i>šatammu</i>	13-16 Nbn
	Ili-remanni <i>ša reš šarri bēl piqitti ayakki</i>	14-16 Nbn
YOS 3 4	Kurbanni-Marduk <i>šatammu</i>	13-16 Nbn
YOS 3 115	Kurbanni-Marduk <i>šatammu</i>	13-16 Nbn
YOS 3 6	People of Uruk: <i>Urukāyu šībātu u šehrūtu</i>	
<i>Bēl-šarru-ušur</i> ("Belshazzar") as crown prince under Nabonidus		
Meissner 1908: 157-159	Mušeziḫ-Marduk <i>šangû Sippar</i>	2-15 Nbn
TCL 9 136	Nabû-šarru-ušur <i>ša reš šarri bēl piqitti ayakki</i>	1-12 Nbn
TCL 9 137	Nabû-šarru-ušur	
YOS 19 103	Nabû-šarru-ušur	
YOS 19 104	Nabû-šarru-ušur	

Apart from one letter from the Ebabbar archive of Sippar,³² all these letters come from the larger letter archive of the Eanna temple of Uruk. But this is simply an accident of recovery. This small corpus of royal letters can be complemented by a body of around two dozen letters from Uruk and Sippar that were written by high-ranking palace officials; these will not be investigated here. Furthermore there are about eighty references to royal communications in letters of temple officials, and very occasionally in other types of texts: the bulk of the information about royal letters comes from this indirect documentation. In addition, there are copies of three letters addressed to royal recipients, which we will discuss in section 2.2.

2.1.1 Royal Letters and Royal Messengers

The imbalance between the few royal letters that have been recovered and the more numerous references to royal letters in letters of temple officials, where the communications of the king are treated relatively frequently as a topic among several others, must be to some extent a coincidence. Nevertheless, the scarcity of extant royal letters may also be due in part to the fact that the royal administration was much more open to the use of Aramaic, and thus of perishable writing materials, than the more conservative temple administrations. In the bilingual context of 6th-century Babylonia,³³ the temples were the bulwark of traditional Babylonian culture, whose primary medium was the cuneiform script and the Babylonian language. The kings, who were at least in part of Aramaic origin, demonstrably employed Aramaic scribes much earlier than did the temples, and in much larger numbers.³⁴ It is therefore probable that at least some of the royal letters referenced in the temple correspondence were written in Aramaic alphabetic script and not in Babylonian cuneiform.

All the preserved royal letters are unsealed, but we can deduce from some of them³⁵ that, just as in the Neo-Assyrian Empire, a special royal seal was impressed on the letter envelopes (which are not preserved). The word *unqu* “seal” in this context in fact simply refers to a letter sealed with an instantly recognizable royal bureau seal.³⁶ In analogy to the Neo-Assyrian royal seal, which depicted the king slaying a lion in close combat,³⁷ one would assume that the seal showed the well-known depiction of the king about to behead an ibex with a scimitar,³⁸ the emblematic symbol of Babylonian kingship (Fig. 4.2).

All extant royal letters are addressed to high temple officials: the chief priests (*šatammu* “bishop”; *šangû* “high priest”) and temple scribes (*tupšar ayakki*) and the royal representatives within the board of temple administrators (*qīpu* “(royal) resident”; *ša rēš šarri bēl piqitti ša ayakki* “royal courtier and temple commissioner”). Often they were sent to the highest-ranking



FIGURE 4.2. *The Neo-Babylonian royal seal. This photograph does not show an actual impression of the seal but rather a detailed copy modeled and incised on a duplicate of the original royal document. British Museum, BM 77612. © Trustees of the British Museum.*

priests and temple administrators collectively, and one letter of Nabonidus was explicitly directed to the entire community of Uruk.³⁹ Only occasionally do we read of middle-ranking temple officials and contractors from outside the temple household who receive royal communications, such as the scribe and commissioner (*bēl piqitti*) Nabû-tabni-ušur.⁴⁰ Such men could also write to the king, or at least threaten to do so when wanting to report on a colleague whose performance was inadequate, as does one Ṭab-šar-Eanna from Uruk.⁴¹

If we consider that references to letters outnumber by far the references to royal messengers (*mār šipri ša šarri*), the king and his bureau seem to have communicated with the temples primarily in writing, rather than orally. There are frequent references to royal letters in the temple correspondence:

- A letter (*šipirtu*) of the king has come, as follows: ‘...’ (Jursa 1997/8: 165)
- The king has written to me as follows: ‘Send as much barley as was winnowed in your presence last year and the year before’. (YOS 21 52)
- Three or four (orders sealed with the) signet ring of the king (*unqātu ša šarri*) have come to me. (TCL 9 119)

Whether these letters were written in Babylonian cuneiform or in Aramaic alphabetic script remains unclear, as the terminology is not explicit (see above).



FIGURE 4.3. A rare example of a royal letter: King Nabonidus to the citizens of Uruk. Yale Babylonian Collection, YBC 7470 (= YOS 3 6). Photograph by Klaus Wagonsonner. Reproduced with permission of the Yale Babylonian Collection.

But letters were clearly the standard form of communication between the king and his administration and other institutions of the state, such as the temples. Whenever messengers are mentioned, they have a special task in addition to delivering a letter or conveying a message, as the following references illustrate:

- Show the (building) ground to my messenger! (YOS 3 6; letter of king Nabonidus to the citizens of Uruk, Fig. 4.3)
- A royal messenger will come and inspect the guard troops. (YOS 3 139)
- The king has written to me about him. I have now sent to my lord Kinû, the royal messenger, and my messenger. Make them search for him there and put him in fetters. (YOS 3 186)

There is no explicit evidence to suggest that a dedicated infrastructure was in place, designed specifically to facilitate the communications of the state. However, the Babylonian Empire certainly had a network of “royal roads” (*harrān šarri*), inherited from the Assyrian Empire under whose dominion such roads had been created in Babylonia from the late 8th century BC onward.⁴² It is likely that these

roads, which had to be maintained by local communities and landowners on behalf of the king, also had the purpose of serving the needs of royal messengers and royal communication in general, as they had before during the time of the Assyrian Empire.

The power of the letter, independent of the messenger who delivered it, can be demonstrated much more fully on the basis of references to non-royal messages.⁴³ Letters were kept for reference, they could be passed on to others, and they had evidentiary value. All this must be true *a fortiori* of royal letters, even though the pertinent evidence is thin.

2.1.2 The Form and Style of Royal Letters

Neo-Babylonian epistolography follows fairly rigid rules with respect to the form given to the salutation formulae and to the actual body of the missive; in addition, the forms of address that serve to establish the relative rank of the correspondents are standardized.⁴⁴ Letters normally begin with the formula “Letter of PN₁ to PN₂,” followed by greeting formulae such as “May the gods GN₁ and GN₂ bless my brother / lord / father”. The main body of the letter is often introduced by stock phrases referring to earlier communications (“As my brother wrote: ...”), and it can generally be divided into a narration part and a petition, the former of which establishes the background for the latter.⁴⁵ Neo-Babylonian royal letters follow this pattern in general, but they exhibit significant differences in detail which mark them as a formally distinct subgroup of the Neo-Babylonian letter corpus.

Royal letters are not introduced by the formula “Letter (*tuppu*) of PN.” Just like their Assyrian counterparts (see Radner, this volume), they begin instead with the phrase “Word of the king to PN” (*amāt šarri ana PN*) and the king is never identified by name. The greeting formula that is common in non-royal letters is replaced by a statement of royal well-being, which is expected to delight the recipient. Thus the beginning of a typical royal letter runs as follows:

Word of the king to Kurbanni-Marduk. I am well. Be happy! (*šulmu yāši libbaka lū tābka*) (YOS 3 4)

Many non-royal letters have closing statements in which the sender promises to pray for the addressee; they serve as an expression of (anticipatory) gratitude for the addressee’s expected collaboration in the matter addressed in the letter. In some royal letters, an inverted form of this formula can be found:

Pray for me to the Lady of Uruk and to Nanaya. (YOS 21 1)

It is only ruling kings who employ these inversions of the standard epistolographic format. Crown princes follow the rules of conventional letter writing as generally required also for other high-ranking correspondents. They identify

themselves by name and sometimes also by title, and greeting formulae are used, but this is the limit of their employment of conventional politeness. The form of address is the second person singular (or the imperative) rather than the indirect form of address in the third person singular (as in: “Let my brother do...”), and the crown princes never refer to their correspondents with the kinship term “brother” which other high-ranking letter writers occasionally do use to create the polite (but *de facto* false) impression of conceding equal social rank to their correspondents:

Letter of Bel-šarru-ušur, the son of the king, to Nabû-šarru-ušur. May the gods ordain your well-being. (TCL 9 136⁴⁶)

The body (“narration” and “petition,” or rather, command) of the royal letters is extremely terse. Structurally, the narration part in letters serves to introduce the request and to justify it by argumentation and/or support it by persuasion.⁴⁷ The kings and crown princes feel very little need for persuasion: they directly introduce the principal topic of the missives and then give orders, which they normally emphasize by using expressions like “quickly” or “urgently” or “Do not neglect...” But this general terseness and the imperative tone notwithstanding, there is still a clear difference between the phrasing of the letters that Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar sent to Eanna temple of their home city, Uruk, and the letters Nabonidus sent to the same temple.⁴⁸ While the former refer repeatedly to the “temple of my gods,”⁴⁹ there is no such clear involvement of the king with Eanna in the case of Nabonidus: one of his letters⁵⁰ simply has “temple of the gods,” significantly omitting the personal pronoun “my.” Nabonidus even uses threats—gratuitously, it would seem, or in any case without referring to a preceding reason for their employment:

Otherwise, give a proper reply (*amāt šalimti*) to my messenger and ten or fifteen elders and members of the college of priests and let them come and report to me. Whoever will give me incorrect information will have me as his enemy (*ša lā šalāmu ittia idabbubu ana bēl dabābišu atār*). (YOS 3 6)

Nabonidus would probably not have used the words employed by the crown prince Nebuchadnezzar in a letter informing the Eanna establishment about the military efforts of his father Nabopolassar against the Assyrians:

The king has gone to Harran. A large force of Medes went with him. Whoever loves the king and who loves me, the father and the son, should not withhold their [service]. (TCL 9 99; collated)

2.1.3 The Topics of the Royal Correspondence with the Temples

The topics of the missive sent by the kings to the temples can be divided into three general categories: formulaic statements; decisions and commands referring to

specific cases; and general rulings or decrees. A typical example is this letter of king Nabopolassar to the “bishop” (*šatammu*) of the Eanna temple at Uruk (c. 611–602 BC), quoted here in full:

Word of the king to Nabû-nadin-šumi: I am well, be happy.

Regarding the affair of Šamaš-tabni-ušur, about whom you wrote to me: I have taken care of the matter. Do not neglect (your) duty in Eanna, the temple of my gods. Good bread, good beer and fat sheep should be presented to my gods. Do your duty in the temple of my gods and pray for me to Bel and Nabû. (BM 118097; unpublished)

Here, a specific piece of information, the decision regarding Šamaš-tabni-ušur, is combined with a general exhortation directed at a temple official to fulfill his cultic duty in the most careful manner. These kinds of statement recur in most of Nabopolassar’s and Nebuchadnezzar’s letters, while they are absent in the extant letters of Nabonidus. Similarly, another letter, probably sent to the “bishop” (*šatammu*) of the Eanna temple by Nebuchadnezzar, reads as follows:

Word of the king to Nadin: I am well, be happy.

Levy all the men Iqīšaya has gathered together as well as the commanders-of-fifty, the elders of the Village-of-the-Scribe, and as many archers as he has given to you and... (gap). Do not not be negligent with respect to what I have written to you. (Spurlock Museum, University of Illinois (SMUI) 1913.14.1508; unpublished)⁵¹

Another example of a very specific command can be found in the letter of an official:

The king commands (*amāt šarri šī*): Aplaya son of Balaṭu is to come here in iron fetters. (YOS 3 182)

A general ruling of the king is quoted in another letter by a certain Kudurru, who is identified in the text as the “bishop” of Eanna. This is actually the crown prince Nebuchadnezzar, Kudurru being a common abbreviation for his full name Nabû-kudurri-ušur:

Thereupon Kudurru objected (by saying): ‘The king commands (*amāt šarri šī*): no-one (i.e., no official) is to accept any gifts (*mamma qīštu ul iṣabbat*)’ (BIN 1 73)

Overall, the topics addressed by royal missives include the following:

- the proper execution of routine cultic duties (e.g. BM 118097; YOS 3 5; YOS 3 1);
- the performance of specific work referring to the cultic sphere (YOS 3 4: referring to the placement of inscribed stelae; YOS 3 6: choosing

a building ground for a temple; YOS 19 104: manufacture of a cultic object, cf. CT 22 245; TCL 9 132; TCL 9 136: gold to be used for the Eanna temple);

- the management of temple offices (BM 103630);
- the sending of foodstuffs needed by another temple (TCL 9 139);
- the sending of foodstuffs or cultic objects to the king or other members of the royal family or the royal administration (Smith 1926: 443–445: a seal of a god; Meissner 1908: 157–159: a stele, to the crown prince; TCL 9 136: gold; YOS 19 103: gold; MacGinnis 1996: 20: offerings, to the king; also Weisberg 1967: 9–10);
- the dispatching of personnel to the king (YOS 3 3: priests for a specific ceremony; TCL 9 99; YOS 3 44 and SMUI 1913.14.1508: soldiers; YOS 3 186: prisoners);
- the management of personnel and personal debts and the settlement of pertinent disputes (e.g., CT 22 150; CT 22 174; YOS 3 2; YOS 3 182; YOS 21 1; YOS 21 89);
- the announcement of an intercalary month (YOS 3 115; YOS 3 142);
- irrigation matters and canal building (TCL 9 119; YOS 21 52; YOS 21 176);
- matters of livestock management within the realm of the temples (BIN 1 72⁵²; MacGinnis 1996: 21);
- general management of temple property (TCL 9 106: sealing of containers).

Two principal fields of royal interest can be discerned. The majority of royal communications to the temples was concerned with the cult, with respect to both the maintenance of routine practice and the undertaking of specific tasks in particular situations. People management was the second important topic that prompted the kings to write to the temples: the levying of manpower and the settlement of the frequent disputes resulting from this, as well as conflicts that concerned the king as a guarantor of justice in the land. Lack of labor was a serious problem that continually hampered agricultural development and large-scale building projects in the institutional sector of the economy⁵³, and the king, as the highest judicial authority, was invoked to mediate when two parties claimed the same laborers for their projects.

Apart from the question of manpower, however, agriculture, livestock breeding, and the other economic practices of the temples, which were responsible for generating the bulk of the written documentation recovered from the temple archives, prompted only a small number of the attested interventions and communications of the king. The conclusion must surely be that royal economic interests were in general well served by the royal officials represented in the upper echelons of the temple administrations (such as *qīpu* “(royal) resident”

and *ša rēš šarri bēl piqitti ša ayakki* “royal courtier and temple commissioner”), but that the paramount importance of the cult and the conflict-ridden management of manpower necessitated interference and a constant stream of directives from the palace.

2.2 *Letters to the King*

In comparison to the numerous references to letters written by kings, there is only a handful of cases referring to letters sent to the king, and we have only three actual copies of letters that were sent to royal recipients. The first of these, quoted in full in the following, was sent to king Nabopolassar on occasion of his accession to the throne by the highest-ranking officials of Uruk and the Eanna temple. Specifically, this letter was written on the occasion of the first shearing of sheep to take place in Nabopolassar’s reign as king of Babylon:

To the king of all the lands, our lord: your servants Amurru-udammiq, Kudurru and Marduk-šakin-šumi.

Let Uruk and Eanna pray for the king of all the lands, our lord. Every day, at the opening of the gate and at the closing of the gate, we appeal to the Lady of Uruk and to Nanaya for health and long life of the king of all lands, our lord, for his good spirits and his well-being, for the stability of his royal throne and that he may vanquish his enemies.

Our service in Eanna, the temple of your gods, is going well. We have begun the sheep-shearing in the temple of your gods. We have prayed to the Lady of Uruk and to Nanaya for the king of all lands, our lord, as follows: ‘May this be the first of one thousand sheep-shearings during the lifetime of the king of all lands, our lord.’ (YOS 3 7; written in the second or third month of the accession year of Nabopolassar, 626/5 BC, Fig. 4.4)

From a formal point of view, this letter is a typical report sent by lower-ranking officials to a higher authority—the highest, in fact. Such letters stand out because of the absence of a petition, a specific request that explicitly motivates the writing of the entire letter.⁵⁴ The implicit intent of the letter is the obvious desire to fulfill the typical duty of the subordinates to inform their superior of their activities, even when all that can be said is that all is well and that work progresses as it should. In this respect the letter simply mirrors the formalized exhortations found in royal letters,⁵⁵ and as such it is probably typical of a large part of the correspondence that the temples dispatched to the Babylonian kings. But beyond that there is a noticeable degree of flattery, an emphatic *captatio benevolentiae* that must be owed to the special occasion and to Nabopolassar’s close relationship to Uruk, and perhaps also to the overall uncertainty of the new political situation after the secession from the Assyrian Empire.⁵⁶ The fact that a copy of the letter was kept in the archive testifies to the fact that it was considered significant and possibly of use for future reference.

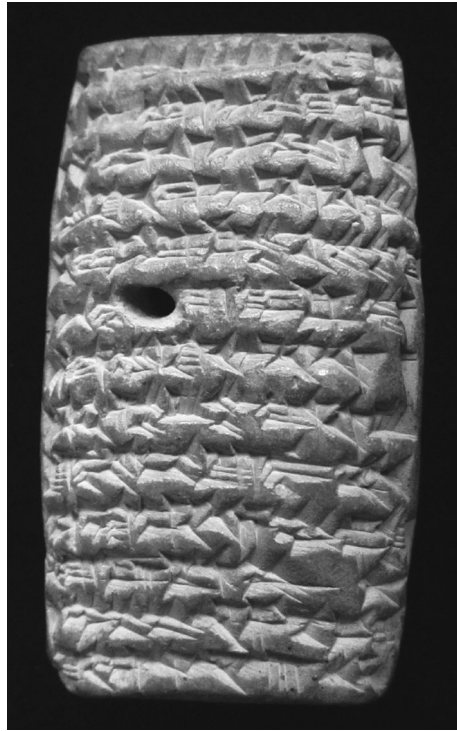


FIGURE 4.4. *A letter of the citizens of Uruk to king Nabopolassar. Yale Babylonian Collection, YBC 7451 (= YOS 3 7). Photograph by Klaus Wagonsonner. Reproduced with permission of the Yale Babylonian Collection.*

The other two known letters addressed to kings are letters of denunciation. The letter of the temple scribe Bel-nadin-apli⁵⁷ was probably sent to king Nebuchadnezzar, who is also the likely recipient of the other, similarly phrased text.⁵⁸ Both letters refer to Urukean fugitives who, having committed a crime against the king, are said to be hiding in different Babylonian cities. Names, filiations, and exact locations (“in the house of PN in GN”) are given and royal action is requested. While it is possible that copies of the letters were kept in the temple archive of Uruk for reference purposes, it is perhaps more likely, given the rarity of copies of outgoing letters in general, that these letters are the original documents that were sent back by the king together with his reply with instructions to the temple administration.

Can any of these three letters be considered typical of the missives normally sent to the king by members of the temple administrations? I consider this unlikely and would argue that it was their exceptional nature that has led to their preservation in the first place.

2.3 Audiences and Royal Visits

The king had a busy schedule of audiences, and it is possible to reconstruct the general structure of these events.⁵⁹ Among those who met with him in this fashion were the temple officials who had the duty to present themselves frequently at court⁶⁰:

Marduka has come back from the king on the 23rd of the month of Abu.
(VS 6 202)

But also contractors and businessmen working in the temple sphere, who were dependent on royal patronage to secure their business there, were eager to meet the king.⁶¹ As a result of these audiences, the temple correspondence contains references to the activities of the king and to news from court and sometimes even reports the king's very words. Oral reports made directly to the king are sometimes presented as an alternative to writing to the sovereign.⁶²

Temple officials who are in the king's presence at court in Babylon or meet with him while he is on campaign report the movements or activities of the king to their colleagues⁶³ or announce impending royal visits⁶⁴—thinly disguised warnings. After such visits to the temple, absent officials are briefed in detail about what they have missed:

The king's son who has visited the temple has drunk some milk, and thanks to Šamaš (*ina šulê ša Šamaš*) he was content. Having arranged everything, I had an audience with him (*ina pānišu attaziz*). (CT 22 63)

Officials report how the king has been informed about certain subjects⁶⁵ or urge their correspondents to take a certain course of action "lest the king hear about it and become angry with us."⁶⁶ In the king's absence, officials can be brought to heel by the threat of the crown prince being informed.⁶⁷

Encounters with royalty were clearly necessary, but not always a pleasure:

The king is apoplectic with rage (*haniq*) against all of Babylon and wouldn't hear what I had to say. (YOS 21 149)

The addressee of this letter is Marduk-eṭer, the temple scribe of the Eanna temple of Uruk late in the reign of Nabopolassar and early in the reign of his successor Nebuchadnezzar. The king with the hair-trigger temper was therefore one of these two rulers. Nabonidus too seems to have had a difficult temper, as the following quote from a legal document shows:

The king, our lord, beat up the man who told him this (*šarru bēlāni amīlu ša ana muhhi iqbāššu iṭṭeri*). (YOS 6 71 & 72)

There is no reason not to take this passage's wording literally and seriously. It is an evocative contrast to the carefully crafted royal self-representation that one

finds in the royal inscriptions: Nabonidus's interaction with the messenger was nothing if not personal and direct.

IN CONCLUSION

The available documentation for royal correspondence during the Neo-Babylonian period gives us at best a glimpse of what must have been a regular stream of missives that were exchanged among the king, the court, and the royal chancellery on one hand and royal officials, priests, and office-holding urban notables in the cities of the empire. Typically, royal letters were short and contained an explicit request to deal with specific problems, more often than not in the realm of the cult or of the recruitment and management of personnel, one of the principal interests of the state in this period. The second most frequent type of royal letter contained general exhortations to serve diligently in the king's interest.

Administrative procedures were in part bureaucratic and rational, as expected—the standardized structure of the letters and the probable use of documents sealed with the royal bureau seal (*unqu*) being cases in point. On the other hand, official hierarchies were obviously steep and comparatively unarticulated. Owing to this fact the royal administration, if not necessarily the king in person, could easily be involved in very minor affairs, such as “an ox and three sheep.”⁶⁸ This reflects the nature of the Babylonian administrative system as a patrimonial bureaucracy.

State Communications in the Persian Empire

Amélie Kuhrt

AFTER briefly discussing the sources¹ for the Persian Empire and the basic underpinnings of its government and administration, the main part of this chapter deals with the role of state communications in holding together the empire's diverse and vast territories.

The Achaemenid Empire² is the earliest of the great Iranian empires (c. 550–330 BC). The name derives from the legendary founder of its ruling dynasty, Achaemenes, which was also the name of the royal clan (Hdt. I 125), members of which ruled the empire for over 200 years. It was the largest empire the world had yet seen, spanning the territory from the Hellespont to north India, including Egypt and extending in Central Asia up to the frontiers of modern Kazakhstan. Unlike earlier and later periods, no contemporary political entity of even remotely comparable size or power capable of challenging it existed along its frontiers, until the development of Macedonian power under Philip II (r. 359–336 BC).

Before Cyrus's conquests in 550 BC, the Persians are barely attested in the world of the Middle East. Archaeological and written evidence suggests that until around the mid-7th century BC, they consisted of pastoral groups located in the region of modern Fars (Old Persian Parsa; Greek Persis),³ which had previously formed part of the important, though poorly known and still surviving, kingdom of Elam, centered now on Susa.⁴ A linguistically related people, the Medes, located further north in the Zagros and around modern Hamadan (ancient Ecbatana) appear more prominently in the 8th to 6th centuries BC, since they had (in response to pressure from the Assyrian Empire to the west) begun to coalesce into a state and had made some moves toward territorial expansion.⁵ This may, indeed, have put pressure on the emerging principality in Fars and provoked the relatively rapid emergence of a Persian state there. Under its kings Cyrus II and Cambyses II (r. 559–522 BC) this developing polity incorporated, through conquest and in the space of less than thirty years, the large, highly developed empires and states of western Asia—the great Neo-Babylonian Empire (heir to Assyria), Egypt, Lydia, and Elam—as well as Media and Central

Asia, to the north and east.⁶ Elam, Mesopotamia, and Egypt in particular contributed to the emerging formulation of the Persian imagery of power.⁷ This can be particularly clearly seen in the Achaemenid royal monuments and iconography, although these traditions were fundamentally and deliberately reshaped in the process of adoption and adaptation. Despite serious upheavals experienced by the empire as a result of this amazingly rapid expansion, it survived⁸ and, indeed, expanded when Darius I (r. 522–486 BC) added the Indus Valley to the empire. Although his and his son's attempts to add territory in Europe failed to impose lasting direct control there, the empire suffered little territorial loss. By Xerxes's reign (r. 486–465 BC), we can describe it as a "mature" and stable state.⁹

1 SOURCES

The sources for understanding the empire present us with difficulties, not so much because they are sparse but because they are extremely disparate and exist in a number of different languages and forms.¹⁰ Before excavation and decipherment of the early eastern scripts, the Achaemenid Empire was known primarily through classical and biblical sources.

1.1 *Classical Writers*

Classical writers include especially the Greek historian Herodotus who wrote in the later 5th century BC.¹¹ As his aim was to celebrate the victories won by Greeks over Persians between 490 and 478 BC, his valuable information is limited, chronologically, to the early period of the empire. Although Herodotus gives us a sense of the broad geographical sweep of the empire, he treated the imperial regions very superficially, apart from Egypt and the northwestern frontier area (modern western Turkey), because his focus was the Graeco-Persian conflict. Later classical writers, aside from the "Alexander historians,"¹² generally exhibit similar geopolitical limitations. One exception is the early 4th century writer Ctesias, a doctor at the Achaemenid court who wrote a substantial history of Persia. Unfortunately, his work survives only in a heavily epitomized version made by the 9th-century Byzantine patriarch Photius.¹³ Because of the fascination exercised by the wealth and power of the Persian ruler, many classical writers tend to focus on tales of court corruption and intrigue. As a result, the image of the empire to be gleaned from these sources is lopsided and partial.

1.2 *The Old Testament*

An influential picture of the Persian kings as restorers of the Jerusalem temple and supporters of the Yahweh cult emerges from the Old Testament.¹⁴ This alone is responsible for the mistaken notion of a unique policy of Achaemenid religious tolerance.¹⁵ A Persian court story, comparable in some respects to the classical tales, is represented by the book of Esther.¹⁶

1.3 Monumental Royal Inscriptions

Inscriptions exist in the Old Persian script,¹⁷ which was deciphered in the 19th century. However, the surviving texts are largely intended to reflect the unchanging majesty of Persian power; the one exception is Darius I's inscription at Bisotun. They are thus not (so far, at least) directly informative on political changes or administrative structures.¹⁸

1.4 Documents

To illuminate administrative and political structures, other sources—Babylonian,¹⁹ Egyptian,²⁰ Aramaic²¹ and Elamite²²—have to be used. These last comprise two sets: c. 100 tablets from the Persepolis Treasury (= PT), dating between 490 and 459 BC, and several thousand from the Fortification Wall (= PF) at the same site dating from 509 to 494 BC (Fig. 5.1). They are exceptionally significant in providing insight into the intricacies of the Persian bureaucracy.²³

(a)

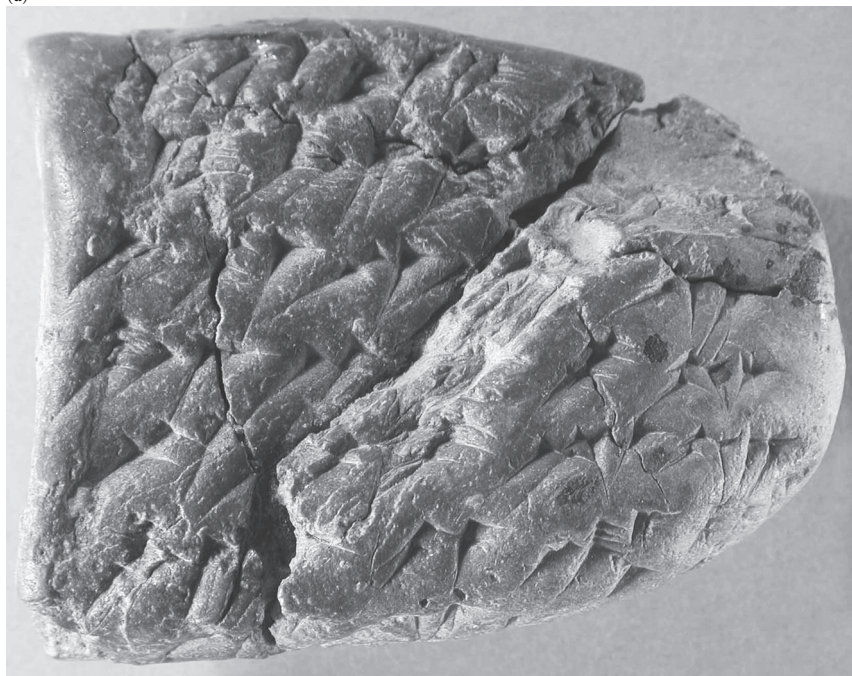


FIGURE 5.1. PF 1285, one of the “Q” texts from Persepolis recording rations issued to travelers. Here a royal messenger in the express service, carrying a passport (Elamite *halmi*) issued by the king, has received 1.5 litres of flour. Photographs courtesy of M.W. Stolper and the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

(b)



FIGURE 5.1. CONTINUED

Very important, too, are the other Aramaic documents. Aramaic had been widely used in the Near East, especially in the Neo-Assyrian Empire, before the Persian conquest and was adopted by the régime as the most widely used administrative language.²⁴ Its widespread use is now dramatically illustrated by the leather documents and boards from Bactria-Sogdiana (Afghanistan), the majority dating from Artaxerxes II (r. 405–359 BC) to Alexander III (“the Great”; his reign over the whole empire dates to 330–323 BC). They show unmistakably that this area was tightly held by the Achaemenids down to the very end of the empire’s existence.²⁵

1.5 Archaeological Exploration

Archaeological exploration has covered the area of the empire unevenly.²⁶ Most attention has been paid to the great royal centers of Pasargadae,²⁷ Persepolis,²⁸ and Susa.²⁹ But recently the Achaemenid levels of long-occupied sites in conquered territories such as Sardes in Lydia,³⁰ the Levant,³¹ and Central Asia³² are being examined more closely. One problem is that a number of sites known to have been very important in the period are covered by extensive modern

towns, making excavation difficult; this is true, for example, of Arbela (modern Erbil in northeastern Iraq) and Ecbatana (modern Hamadan).

2 IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION³³

2.1 *Satrap and Subjects*

The immense imperial territories were divided into provinces, generally called by the Iranian-derived term “satrapies.” Each province was extensive, and each was governed by a “satrap” (governor) who was virtually always a Persian or Iranian noble resident in the satrapal capital. The satrapal center was in many cases identical with the old capital of the original political units conquered, but modifications to this system were introduced, although not all at the same time but in response to particular circumstances. For example, Hellespontine Phrygia was reorganized as a distinct satrapy with its capital at Daskyleion in the 470s BC;³⁴ certainly by early in Xerxes’s reign, the area that had formed the Neo-Babylonian Empire was divided into two new satrapies: “Beyond the River,” west of the Euphrates and stretching down to the Egyptian frontier, and Babylonia, comprising the whole of Mesopotamia.³⁵ In the course of the 4th century, Caria and Lycia were organized as a single satrapy,³⁶ and Idumaea (Negev Desert region) was formed into a distinct administrative district.³⁷

The satrapal capital functioned as the administrative center of the governor. It is here that tax was collected and stored (or sent on), satrapal archives were kept, petitions sent, and royal orders and edicts received. Each satrapal capital contained a palace, used by the satrap himself and also maintained for the king on visits.³⁸ Physical evidence of such a palace, partly decorated in a Persian style, has been found at Babylon.³⁹ Such satrapal residences in the provinces are attested in Egypt at Memphis, in western Anatolia at Daskyleion and Sardeis, in Babylon, in Ecbatana, and in Bactra (modern Balkh in northern Afghanistan). In addition, there were fortified storehouses dotted throughout the provinces and their subdivisions. In the Persian heartlands (Fars, Elam) were the major royal centers, such as the old city of Susa, which was completely rebuilt in a typically Persian style, and the new, spectacular foundations of Pasargadae and Persepolis. The satrap himself was, within his satrapy, in control of military affairs, such as general mobilization (for war and public works) and the garrisons which served to protect the population as well as maintain order in the province. He also controlled its administrative and financial affairs to ensure the province’s continued productivity.⁴⁰

2.2 *Regional Variation*

Despite the unification of so many different areas under the imperial umbrella, there were regional diversities in administration. The transhumant populations

of the great Zagros mountain chain, for example, were never integrated into the provincial structure. Topography made military campaigns there difficult, and, in addition, the highly mobile population was hard to pin down. Here the Persians and these scattered mountain dwellers arrived at a *modus vivendi*. The Persian king regularly presented the local leaders with gifts, creating and renewing a mutually profitable alliance: it allowed the king to draw on their manpower as and when needed, particularly for the army; in response, the various groups helped to secure routes through the mountains, and their goodwill reduced the incidence of raids on nearby farming communities.⁴¹ It also allowed the Persians access to the flocks of sheep and goats bred by the mountain dwellers, which they could exchange for commodities in short supply locally, such as wine and cereals.⁴²

Arab groups, on the empire's fringe, enjoyed another kind of relationship with the central authority. In return for helping with finding safe routes through the desert and organizing the lucrative caravan trade which ran from the southern tip of the peninsula to Palestinian ports, such as Persian-controlled Gaza, they paid no tax but instead presented the king with a regular "gift" of incense, creating a mutually beneficial relationship. Arab contingents, too, are attested as serving in the Achaemenid armies.⁴³

Another important frontier group were the nomadic Scythians living in the steppes beyond the Oxus. How precisely the Persian authority managed relations with them is unknown, but they certainly supplied warriors to the Persian army, particularly as marines,⁴⁴ which again suggests that a reciprocal arrangement had been set up.⁴⁵ The carpets from the "Scythian Frozen Tombs" of the Altai mountains, near China, decorated in a recognizably Achaemenid style, may be a distant reflection of this network of relationships.⁴⁶

Other groups inside and on the margins of the empire had analogous relationships with the imperial government, such as some of the Nubian groups bordering on Egypt, who regularly supplied set quantities of gold, ebony, ivory, and boys as well as soldiers.⁴⁷ The territory of the Caucasus, too, supplied troops and regular gifts,⁴⁸ and recent excavations in Georgia and Armenia show that local dynastic residences were architecturally modeled on those of the royal centers,⁴⁹ indicative of close links. Others for whom the evidence is less full but who seem to have enjoyed a broadly similar relationship with the empire are the Pisidians, Mysians, and Paphlagonians of Asia Minor, the islands of the Persian Gulf, diverse Indians, and the various Libyan groups to the west of Egypt. It is probably appropriate as well to visualize the dynamics of relations between European Greeks with the empire as essentially similar. That is not, of course, the way they are presented by the classical writers, who give us their perspective on this interaction and paint it in heroic colors. But when stripped of that rhetoric, their stories indicate that Persia's links with people living on its imperial edges (such as the Greeks) were close yet fluid—unstable and subject to repeated negotiations

in order to establish or renew alliances. Nonetheless, the fact that the Persian authorities were able to draw on Greek manpower resources over the whole time of the empire's existence is undeniable, as is Greek receptiveness to Persian material culture⁵⁰; in one instance even an act of royal benefaction bestowed on Athens is noted.⁵¹ Centers in European Greece, like others lying along the imperial frontiers,⁵² also provided places of refuge for exiles from the regime.⁵³ The Greek evidence provides an invaluable series of vignettes on how peoples living along the empire's margins were drawn into its orbit and compelled to interact with it.

Various provinces, too, reflect differences in the style of imposition of Persian control, indicative of local factors with which the authorities had to deal. Egypt, for example, retained its own very characteristic culture, especially in the realm of artistic expression and production, in styles of architecture, and in its belief system, which traditionally assigned a special divine role to the king. As a result, from Cambyses on, Persian kings were hailed as pharaohs, represented as such and given a pharaonic-style titulary.⁵⁴ In Babylonia, too, the Persian king acted in accordance with local royal ideology. The Babylonian ruler was expected to build and maintain temples and city walls, to confirm the protected status of certain cities, to ensure that rituals were performed, to authorize divine offerings, and to support important ceremonies.⁵⁵ At no point were the essential ingredients for carrying out these crucial rituals dismantled or suppressed by the Persians.⁵⁶ It is, however, very probable that the precise patterns of their enactment and associated royal activities were modified. Certainly, the grip of the old established families associated with the cults had definitively been broken by 484, when they were replaced by new personnel more tightly linked to the regime.⁵⁷

Further, within each satrapy, local conditions varied from place to place because a diversity of political units could all form part of one overall satrapy. Thus, in the province "Beyond the River," a place such as Jerusalem, with the district of Yehud, retained its sacred laws and priestly hierarchy and was governed by Jews; neighboring Samaria was administered by the local family of Sanballat⁵⁸; the Phoenician cities continued under the control of local rulers,⁵⁹ while Ammon, east of the Jordan, formed a provincial subdivision under a local governor⁶⁰ and, as said, in the course of the 4th century the Negev region was organized as the sub-province of Idumaea.⁶¹ So, while all these divergent entities were answerable to the Persian satrap in (probably) Damascus, internally they lived according to their local customs. Similarly in Turkey, there were individual Greek cities, variously governed by democratic city councils, oligarchies or city-tyrants, with other regions under local dynasts. All these different political units related to the relevant satrap as the overarching authority.

2.3 Central Control

This variation in patterns of rule does not indicate imperial weakness. The varieties of political relationship and domination should rather be seen as a positive element, which made central government more elastic and sensitive in its response to local needs and conditions while maintaining strong overall control for its own benefit.⁶² Notably, the empire endured for over 200 years, experiencing within that time only one serious loss—Egypt, which had seceded by 400/399; however, it was regained in 343, so even that loss proved not to be permanent. Moreover, from Darius I on, the grip of the Achaemenid family on the throne was never broken: despite repeated violent struggles for the succession, its hold of the kingship was never effectively challenged. Aside from the secession of Egypt and chronic problems in frontier-regions, such as the Aegean seaboard, all serious revolts from about 480 onward, with the exception of Egypt, took place inside the Persian power structure itself and centered on struggles at court for the throne; that is, they did not threaten the coherence of the empire—they turned on who should rule it.⁶³

Despite local variations in the form of Persian rule, control of the various provinces by the satraps was extremely effective. The rule of exclusively appointing Persians/Iranians to these high positions seems generally to have been the norm, reinforced by Iranians always holding the highest military commands and the most important posts in the provinces. At the same time, members of the central authority developed close links with local élites in various areas of the empire, which could lead to the recruitment of members from such groups to powerful government positions, particularly noticeable in the empire's later phases.⁶⁴ There are also indications of intermarriage: Persian nobles married women from the families of local dynasts;⁶⁵ local dignitaries or soldiers who had particularly distinguished themselves are reported receiving wives from high-ranking Persian families.⁶⁶ Very interesting is the chance information that the secondary wives of the kings themselves could be non-Persian, and in certain circumstances their sons might succeed to the throne, as in the case of Darius II (r. 423–405 BC).⁶⁷ Thus, while power was carefully restricted to an exclusive group made up of Persian aristocrats, this group could and did recruit selected members of the subject populations, so that the governing group established a system of kinship ties and local alliances that reached right into the various local subject populations and helped to root its power at that level to create an identity of interest. Alongside this, we see Persian dignitaries developing links with local cults.⁶⁸

Lower down the social scale, local peoples, soldiers, and deportees were allocated land parcels that carried with them the obligation to perform specified military duties when required.⁶⁹ The parcels could be identified according to the kind of service required⁷⁰: “bow-land” for archers, “horse-land” for cavalrymen

and “chariot-land” presumably relating to chariot drivers and associated materials. Clearly the aim of assigning such fief holdings was to fulfill imperial army requirements and occupy the imperial lands. Just as clearly, the surviving sources reveal that, after the empire’s formative phase, general call-ups were relatively infrequent and routine needs were often fulfilled by mercenaries or local garrisons, so that at times the obligation associated with a landholding was discharged in the form of a silver tax. Did that weaken the Persian armies? Enough evidence survives to show that the names of the original grantees and the expected military service associated with the grants were kept on satrapal army registers.⁷¹ Since the grants could not be sold, when a demand came to supply, say, a cavalryman, and the descendant of the grantee was not in a position to carry this out, he was obliged to supply and equip a substitute to perform the service on his behalf.⁷² There is thus no reason to suppose that the empire was overdependent on hired mercenaries and incapable of raising an army throughout its existence when necessary—a fact shown clearly during Alexander’s invasion.⁷³ What is less clear, and still debated, is how the state labor requirements were met. It is likely, and the evidence is growing, that conscription for this was organized on the same (or at least similar) basis as army service, and groups of such conscripts were sent to where particular construction projects needed the extra manpower.⁷⁴

Persian-held estates were located throughout the empire, including Central Asia.⁷⁵ While some of the highest-ranking owners held such estates simultaneously in several different regions of the empire and were thus, perforce, absentee landholders, others were firmly and permanently settled on their estates with their families. An estate included a fortified dwelling, and it is clear from several accounts that estates were guarded by soldiers and embraced holders of military fiefs who could be used to fend off attacks or, conversely, were levied by the owner in response to larger military threats. The estates within the provinces thus served to spread the Persian presence and military control throughout the empire.⁷⁶

The king himself (and members of the royal family) also possessed such domains from Lydia to Samarkand, carefully laid out and cultivated—the royal *paradeisoi* including formal gardens, parks, game preserves, orchards, livestock, and arable fields. Keeping and extending land under production was a prime royal concern in order to ensure and safeguard an adequate agricultural base and the concomitant creation of state wealth. Irrigation projects, both the extension of existing ones and the installation of new ones, were particularly fostered by the Persian rulers: in Babylonia the intricate canal system was managed by crown agents; the Bactrian water systems were maintained; a *qanat* system was fostered in northern Iran, and this typically Iranian form of water distribution was introduced in at least one of the Egyptian oases.⁷⁷ The most striking landscape transformation is attested in Fars, where it has been established archaeologically that in the 400–500 years preceding the emergence of the Achaemenid state the

area was sparsely settled, with virtually no large urban centers and a prevailing pastoral mode of land exploitation; by the end of the empire, the region was remarked upon⁷⁸ as a veritable Garden of Eden—densely settled, agriculturally rich, well-watered. The hard reality of this change has been established not only by excavation of the palatial centers of Pasargadae and Persepolis, but also by surveys in the region, which chart the sudden and massive increase of settlements in the Achaemenid period—cities, large and smaller towns, and villages.⁷⁹

3 STATE COMMUNICATIONS

A key role in holding such a diverse and enormous territory together was played by the network of communication. All the various sources provide important details which, when put together, illuminate a complex and highly efficient system that endured for the whole of the empire's existence—much of it, indeed, well beyond.⁸⁰

3.1 *The Evidence*

Although the Persian royal inscriptions are, aside from the Bisotun inscription, limited to delineating images of kingship and commemorating building enterprises largely confined to the Persian heartlands (see section 1.3), their phraseology shows that they were intended to circulate and communicate their messages to a wider audience.⁸¹ Not all, but a very large number, contain, after an introduction, the phrase “Says RN” (Old Persian *θatīy RN*). This pattern has been compared with conventions in earlier Urartian royal texts which, it is suggested, derived it from Neo-Assyrian letter formulae.⁸² Some support for seeing the Persian royal inscriptions as fundamentally epistolary is the fact that versions and portions of some (DB and DNa) have been found in inscribed monumental form in Babylon and in Aramaic on a papyrus at the tiny site of Elephantine in Egypt, suggesting that the text(s) circulated widely in space and time.⁸³ It is also worth noting the phrase echoed in three inscriptions (DNa, DSe, XPh): “What was said to them (sc. my subjects) by me that they did,” that is, the king's word, communicated in whatever form to all, was the effective glue that held the empire together. These are the only certain instances where we hear the ruler's voice directly. The authenticity of what purport to be royal letters is strongly debated. Two figure in literary texts, while one is a 2nd-century AD Greek inscription from Asia Minor.⁸⁴ There are brief references to royal communications in the Persepolis texts,⁸⁵ but none have so far been identified; allusions to orders sent by the king figure in the classical and biblical sources.⁸⁶

Important information on roads, communications, and the messenger service is contained in the cuneiform Elamite Persepolis Fortification Archive,⁸⁷ which can be combined revealingly with evidence in both literary and documentary sources. The thousands of tablets date between 509 and 494 BC. Another

originally substantial administrative archive, of which only the sealed bullae have survived, has been located at Daskyleion, capital of the satrapy of Hellespontine Phrygia in northwest Anatolia; it appears to date from the 5th and early 4th centuries.⁸⁸

Most informative, however, is a set of Aramaic letters mostly written by Arshama, satrap of Egypt, in the later part of the 5th century, to a colleague, possibly his deputy, and the stewards of his estate(s) there. The dossier consists of thirteen sealed letters on leather, now unrolled, plus some fragments. One letter that resisted unrolling has now been opened, but very little that is legible survives.⁸⁹ They were acquired from a dealer in Egypt, so lack a provenance, and are now housed in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. They are associated with two leather bags of apparently the same date, but given the mode of acquisition it is not clear whether the letters and bags belonged together originally.⁹⁰ Closely comparable to the Arshama dossier is a collection of thirty Aramaic leather documents and eighteen wooden tallies acquired by the collector N.D. Khalili from Afghanistan, the Old Persian satrapy of Bactria (see section 1.4). With the exception of one document, where the palaeography suggests a date in the 5th century, all date from the 4th century. They relate to administrative matters as well as affairs relating to the satraps' domain.⁹¹ Finally, three items relating to exchanges between a small Jewish community on Elephantine and local officials in Samaria and Jerusalem (as well as, probably, Arshama) are part of a massive collection of Aramaic papyri and ostraca from the garrison on the island dating to the late 5th century.⁹²

3.2 *Roads and Messengers*

As indicated, the central authority's ability to control the conquered lands, proclaim its presence, collect and monitor its profits, and maintain security depended on an efficient system of communication.⁹³ The Persepolis Fortification Archive provides the most important information on several relevant aspects, particularly via the "Q" texts (Fig. 5.1), recording rations issued to traveling parties en route at official way stations. First, they reveal that the entire empire was linked together by a network of roads. The travel rations memoranda note destinations (or, conversely, starting points) of travelers, so we can see that the roads reached to India (Pakistan), Areia, Bactria (both Central Asia), Carmania (modern Kerman), Media, Elam, Lydia, Babylonia, Egypt, and the Syrian steppe (Fig. 5.2). Particularly valuable is the fact that they note travelers going to, and coming from, the empire's eastern and southwestern regions. This balances Herodotus's description of the "Royal Road" with its stopping points from Sardes to Susa,⁹⁴ expanding the geopolitical perspective to cover the *whole* empire. Documents from the early Hellenistic period⁹⁵ add some further information on stretches of the Persian road system in Caria and Phrygia. It is also clear that there was a north-south route linking the region of Parsa with Ecbatana via modern Isfahan

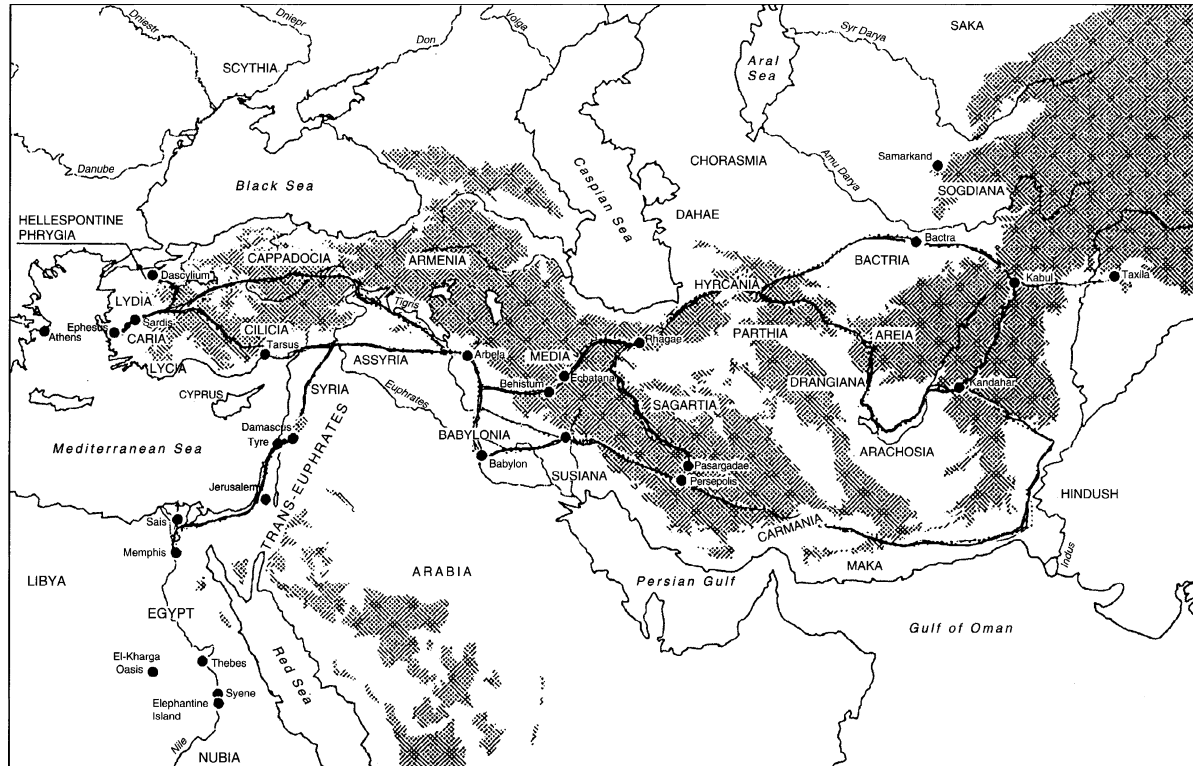


FIGURE 5.2. Map of the main routes in the empire. After Kuhrt 2007a: 736 Fig. 15.1.

(ancient Gabae).⁹⁶ Another point to note is that Ctesias, writing in the 390s BC, ended his work with a description (unfortunately not preserved) of the roads, way stations, and distances from Ephesos in the west to Bactria in Central Asia.⁹⁷ This shows clearly that Achaemenid control of its eastern regions had not been eroded by the 4th century, despite the loss of Egypt, and Ctesias's brief statement is now triumphantly confirmed by the Bactrian documents (see section 1.4). The conclusion must be that this all-embracing communication network was maintained throughout the empire's existence and, indeed, beyond.

Second, the texts from the Persepolis archive make it plain that official authorization was needed to draw on the supplies stored at the official stopping points along routes, and that such issues were carefully logged. Only one example of such a "passport"⁹⁸ has survived: it is one of the Aramaic parchments belonging to the Arshama dossier from Egypt. In it, Arshama, the Persian satrap of Egypt, addressed the officials in overall charge of the way stations within their sub-provinces by name and specified what provisions, how much, and for how long they were to be issued to the traveler carrying the sealed letter of credit:

From Arshama to Marduk, officer in.... ; Nabudalani, officer in Lahiru; Zatuvaḥya, officer in Arzuḥina; Upastabara, officer in Arbela, *Hl.* and Matalubash; Bagafarna, officer in Salam; Fradafarna and *Hw[...]*t, officers in Damascus. Now, he called Nakthor, my steward, is going to Egypt. You are to give him rations charged to my estates in your provinces daily: white flour, 2 'handfuls';⁹⁹ *rami* flour, 3 'handfuls'; wine or beer, 2 'handfuls';... *d/r*, one. Also to his ten servants, each per day: flour, 1 'handful'; fodder for his horses. Give rations to the two Cilicians and one craftsman—all three are servants of mine who are going to Egypt with him—each man per day: flour, 1 'handful'. Each officer in turn, according to the route from province to province until it reaches Egypt, is to give him these rations. If he should be more than one day in a place, then for these days do not give them any rations. Bagasrava knows this order. Rashta is the scribe. (Driver 1956: no. 6; Porten & Yardeni 1986–1994: vol. 1, no. A6.9)¹⁰⁰

The expenditures were noted and debited to the name of the authorizer.¹⁰¹ As the Persepolis material shows, the records were collected by the relevant provincial authorities and the disbursements entered into the yearly account books, where the supplier's account was credited and that of the authorizer debited.

The physical remains of a structure that probably formed part of a way station of the type mentioned by Herodotus and implied by Arshama's "passport" document have been identified. It was situated along the main road leading from the Mesopotamian plain past Bisotun to Ecbatana in Media. Such stopping places formed major inhabited conglomerations, places where substantial quantities of supplies were collected, stored and guarded, one of the duties of the local governors. This is nicely evoked by Xenophon in his account of the Greek

soldiers blundering around in search of food in the northern reaches of Assyria in 401 BC:

In the course of the fifth stage (sc. from Mespila, probably ancient Nineveh), they (i.e. the Greeks) caught sight of a palace of some sort,¹⁰² with many villages round about it... In these villages they remained for three days... because they had provisions in abundance—flour, wine, and great stores of barley that had been collected for horses, all these supplies having been gathered together by the satrap responsible for the district. (Xen. *Anab.* III 24; 31).

Rivers, many of them wide and fast-flowing, and canals were obstacles to free movement. The limited number of safe crossing points—in the shape of permanent bridges, ferries, fords, and pontoons—which could be, and were, guarded, as were mountain passes,¹⁰³ restricted and determined the choice of routes. In mountainous terrain, with few resources and hostile populations, it could become advisable to circumvent the danger by taking to the sea.¹⁰⁴ Diodorus (XIV 81, 4) provides an interesting glimpse of an age-old route that was still in use in the Achaemenid period (and almost certainly beyond): sailing along the Cilician coast, the traveler reached North Syria. From there he moved by land to the Euphrates ford at Thapsacus and then went by boat downriver to Babylon.

When government forces moved into uncharted areas (for example, on campaign), engineers were sent ahead to clear and level the ground.¹⁰⁵ The Persepolis Fortification Archive, too, has references to “road counters,” who surveyed the roads at royal command.¹⁰⁶ Everything points to the existence of an official organization working to expand, modify, repair, and plot the complex road system. How the roads may actually have appeared is uncertain. It is unrealistic to visualize anything like a modern tarmac road, with a camber to help drainage. Any fine surfacing would have been limited to sections of road at gates and inside cities. But they were clearly wide enough and sturdy enough to accommodate and support the weight of chariots and wagons, as the repeated use of the Greek term *hodos hamaxitos* “road for wagons” shows.¹⁰⁷

The military purpose of the roads is plain, and there is no hint that they with their rest stations were accessible to travelers such as private merchants. For soldiers to respond to call-ups without delay, they were crucial. When armies were on the move, commanders needed to be able to rely on sufficient stores for men and animals. As in the Assyrian Empire, this was the responsibility of the local governors,¹⁰⁸ as was the maintenance of roads.¹⁰⁹ Providing water for routes through desert regions, such as the Sinai Peninsula, that were in regular use was another duty of the relevant satrap and his staff.¹¹⁰ Achaemenid-period ostraca from Idumaea (Negev desert) in the 4th century reveal garrisoned stretches of road with locally supplied depots.¹¹¹

All the evidence shows that tight control of the network was a constant and necessary feature to safeguard supplies and depots and protect against attacks, while special guides accompanied important travel parties, both for security and to go ahead to ensure that all was ready for their reception. Official travelers needed armed escorts and could not contemplate undertaking a lengthy journey without official support as well as, of course, the permits. An Egyptian autobiographical text¹¹² refers to the owner's journey from Iran to Egypt, as "the foreigners brought me from land to land and caused me to come safely to Egypt at the command of the Lord of the Two Lands (i.e. king)." This is echoed by Nehemiah, when he requests:

"If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors of the province Beyond-the-River, that they may grant me passage until I arrive in Judah. [...]" Then I came to the governors of the province Beyond-the-River and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent army officers and cavalry with me. (Neh. 2.7–9)

This explains the inscription, set up in Athens, recording the city's profound gratitude to the king of Sidon for helping a civic embassy reach the Persian court safely.¹¹³ The system also ensured that the movements of individuals were monitored,¹¹⁴ which served to maintain security. Evading this constant watchfulness was a tricky and dangerous business. Two colorful anecdotes describe ingenious ways of trying to avoid official scrutiny.¹¹⁵ Although they are almost certainly ahistorical, the point of the stories hinges on the well-known fact that the Persian roads were closely watched. The Persepolis material, implying that way stations were located one day's travel apart, is a reminder of how dense was the web embracing the imperial territories.

The speed and efficiency of the Achaemenid communication service, with its relays of fast mounted messengers (Elamite *pirradaziš*), was legendary.¹¹⁶ The messengers engaged in sensitive and urgent state business were trusted individuals,¹¹⁷ enjoying the king's confidence and, hence, great prestige.¹¹⁸ There are indications that the title "royal messenger" may have become purely honorary, indicative of their high rank. The Persepolis material illustrates some details of the system. With one exception, all the individuals attested in the express service were either traveling with royal authorization or on their way to the king himself.¹¹⁹ Contrary to the many attested travelers who moved in parties accompanied by trains of servants and/or guides, the fast mounted messengers operated either singly or, at most, in groups of three. The horses used for the high-speed communications were stabled and fed separately.¹²⁰ This, in turn, suggests that they were specially selected, bred, and trained.

The Arshama material does not say how the letters were brought to Egypt, although part of the route is probably indicated by the "passport" discussed above: moving up the east side of the Tigris from around Lahiru (northeastern

Babylonia) to around the level of Nineveh, where the river was crossed, and then a route followed down to the Euphrates, which was traversed in the vicinity of Hindanu, whence a traveler moved across the steppe to Palmyra and on to Damascus (Fig. 5.3). The precise route beyond that is not given, but the old “King’s Highway” down the Jordan, through Idumaea and the Sinai Peninsula would seem logical.

3.3 *The Language(s) of Communications*

The Persian Empire with its diverse population spread over a vast terrain was multilingual. Virtually all the royal inscriptions use the three languages at home in Persia: Elamite, Babylonian, and Old Persian, all equally representing the king’s word. In some instances, related to their location, they may also use Egyptian hieroglyphs.¹²¹ The version of Darius I’s texts found at Elephantine in Egypt is in Aramaic, while the one from Babylon uses the local form of Akkadian, differing from that current in western Iran. That this was a noted feature of the empire is echoed in Esther:

Then the king’s secretaries were summoned on the 13th day of the first month, and an edict (...) was written to the king’s satraps and to the governors over all the provinces and to the officials of all the peoples, to every province in its own script and every people in its own language; it was written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king’s ring. (Esther 3.12)

Several of the features evoked will be considered further below; here it is the issue of the different scripts and languages that is the focus. Relevant is a passage in the Bisotun text (DB §70) where Darius I refers almost certainly to the creation of a script to render Old Persian; he follows that with a statement that his message was written on parchment and clay tablets—that is, in different languages—and distributed to all the countries.

This diversity of scripts and languages figures in mundane documents of the administration, too. While the largest number of preserved texts from Persepolis are written on clay in Elamite cuneiform, that is partly connected with their greater capacity for survival. Many of the tablets have short notes added in Aramaic (see section 1.4), and there are an estimated 800 tablets containing short inked and incised notes in Aramaic.¹²² Its extensive use is revealed by repeated references to the administration’s secretaries as “Babylonian scribes (writing) on parchment.”¹²³ The interrelationship of the two languages also emerges clearly in a letter from Princess Irdabama:

Tell the accountant of Šullake, Irdabama spoke thus: “I ordered for Pirmakša(?) the ‘official’ 1500(?) litres grain from my estate. A parchment document (lit. ‘leather tablet’, i.e. written in Aramaic) [...] concerning

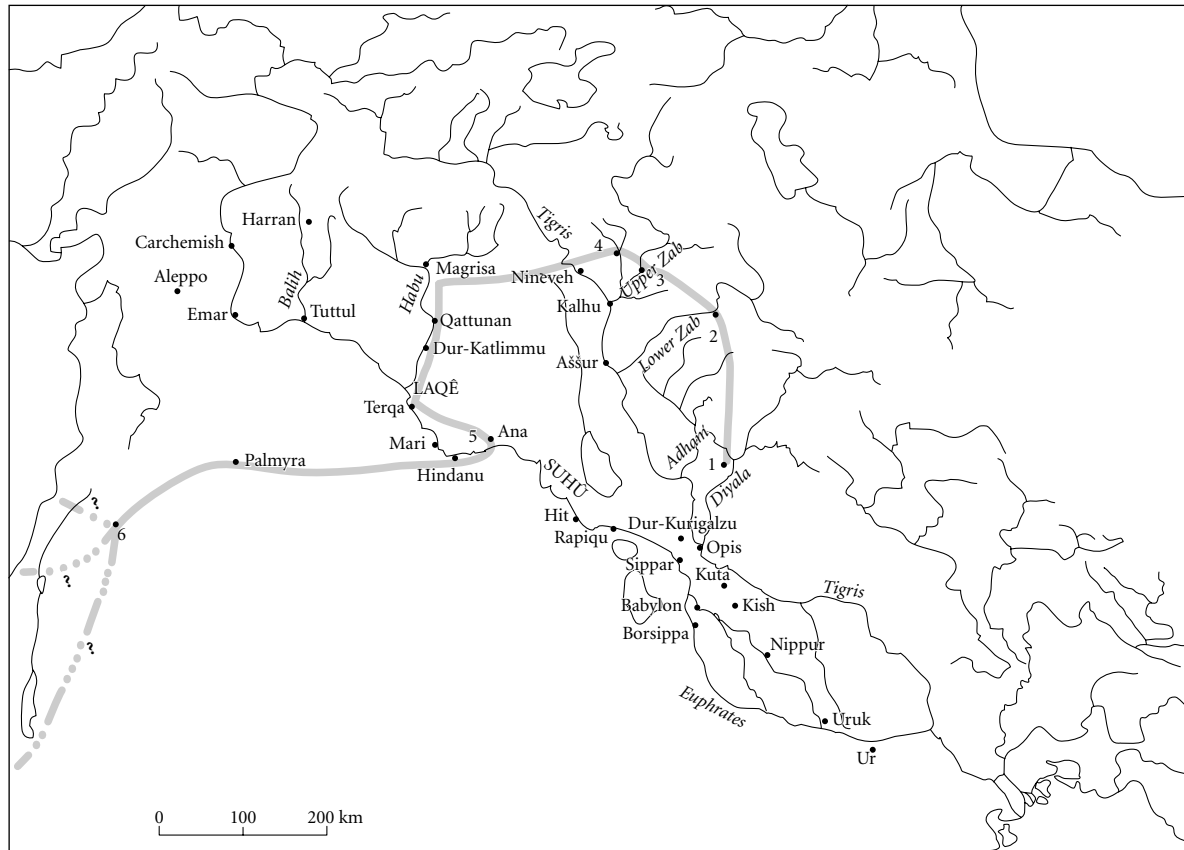


FIGURE 5.3. *Nakhthor's route from northern Babylonia to Damascus. 1 = Lahiru, 2 = Arzuhina, 3 = Arbela, 4 = Halahhu, 5 = Talmish, 6 = Damascus. Adapted from Kuhrt 2007a: 740 Fig. 15.3.*

Raku..., (?) he will make the report. You look at the sealed document (Elamite *halmi*), and do the accounting.” (PFa 27)

So here the Elamite order refers to the expected receipt of a report written in Aramaic.¹²⁴ Nor are these the only languages found in Persepolis: there are also one text each in Phrygian, Greek, and Old Persian, as well as two Babylonian ones.¹²⁵ The first three certainly seem to belong to the regional administrative sphere.¹²⁶ The use of Elamite in administration was not limited to the Persepolis region, although its precise spread and period of use remain opaque.¹²⁷

Undoubtedly, however, the most common language used in communication and administration was Aramaic. Under the Achaemenid Empire, its use spread to Asia Minor, Egypt, Iran, and Central Asia. A great wealth of material comes from Egypt (section 1.4), where the climate has preserved papyri and parchments. Thucydides describes the interception of the Persian Artaphernes en route in 424/423 BC to Sparta with a letter from the king:

He was taken to Athens, where the Athenians had his despatches translated from the Assyrian script (Greek *Assyria grammata*) and read. (Thucydides IV 50)

The reference is clearly to the Aramaic in which the letter was written. Fragments from the satrapal chancellery in Memphis (on papyrus) have been recovered in secondary use from Saqqara, showing that affairs were largely, but by no means exclusively, conducted in Aramaic.¹²⁸ Most interesting is the fact that the Aramaic of the 4th-century Bactrian documents is precisely the same as that found in the earlier Egyptian documents, using identical terminology and administrative style.¹²⁹ This points to the existence of a standard chancellery style in which staff active within the government were trained. This may, indeed, be referred to in one of the Persepolis Fortification texts, where “Persian apprentices copying texts” make their appearance.¹³⁰

Note also that the physical format of letters seems to have been standard throughout the length and breadth of the empire. The best examples are the Arshama letters, which were acquired unopened (section 3.1). Apart from the “passport” authorizing Arshama’s steward to draw on the resources at the official road stations (section 3.2),¹³¹ all the others were rolled horizontally (Fig. 5.4). The right outer edge was then folded in to the middle and the left one folded on top. This bundle was then tied with string encased in clay onto which the seal was impressed, and the address with a short note of content written on the narrow surface (Fig. 5.5). One of the much later documents from Bactria exhibits exactly the same folding and sealing practice,¹³² and the Daskyleion bullae from the opposite end of the empire (section 3.1) suggest that they sealed material of very similar shape.¹³³

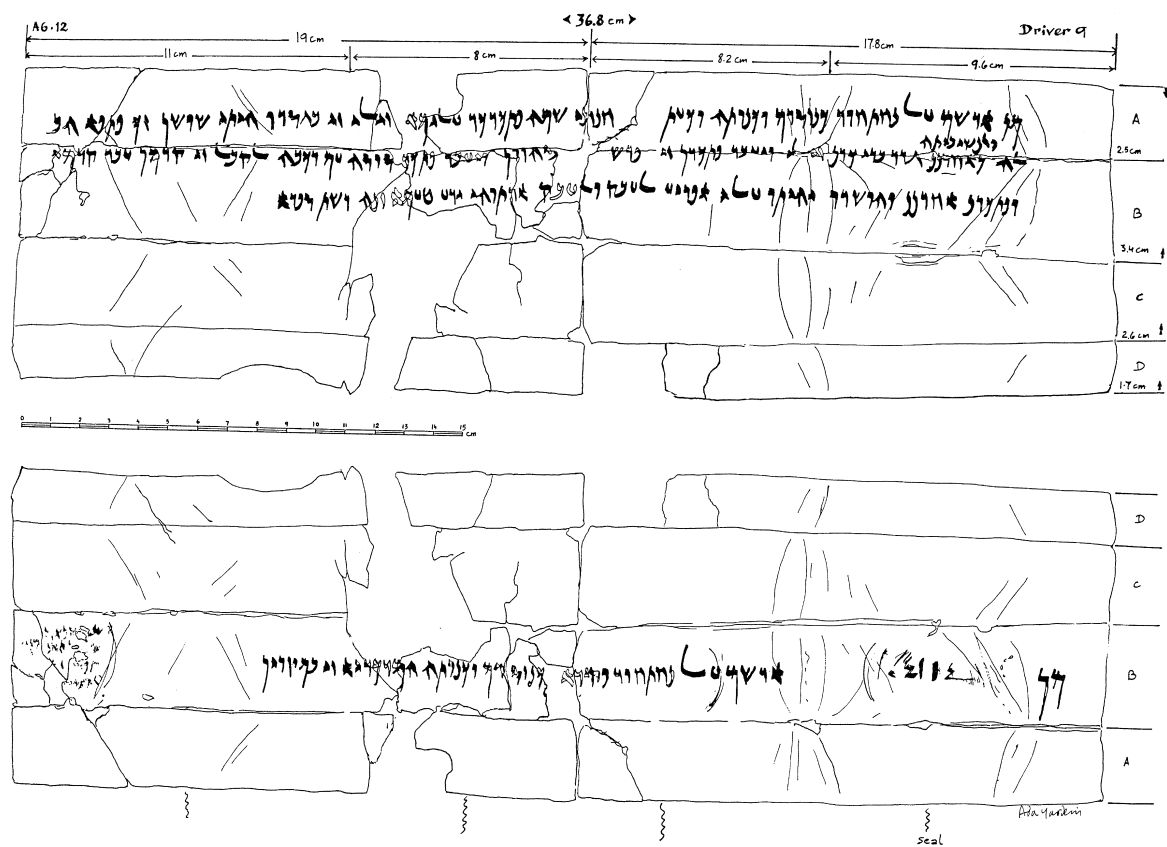


FIGURE 5.4. An Aramaic letter of the Arshama correspondence. Facsimile of Driver 1956: no. 9, showing content and address, with Demotic notation. Drawing courtesy of Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni, after Porten & Yardeni 1986, vol. 1: 121.

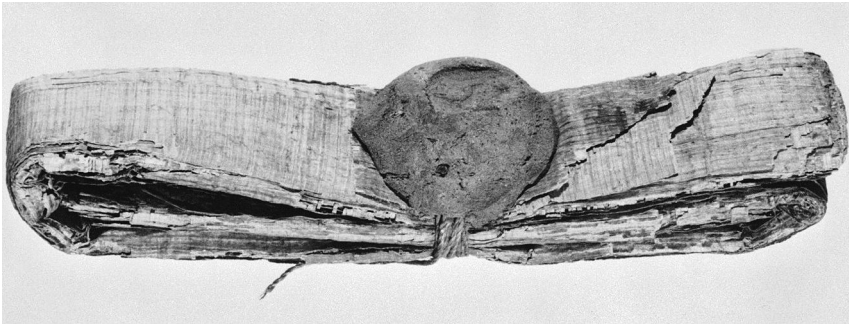


FIGURE 5.5. *Folded and sealed papyrus from Elephantine, documenting a marriage contract in 449 BC. Brooklyn Museum, Bequest of Theodora Wilbour from the collection of her father, Charles Edwin Wilbour, 47.218.89. © Brooklyn Museum, with permission.*

Yet Aramaic did not oust the use of local languages by any means. Part of a correspondence between Pherendates, satrap in Egypt in the early 5th century, and the staff of the Khnum temple on Elephantine was conducted in Demotic, but the letter from the satrap himself has quite obviously been translated from Aramaic.¹³⁴ Several of the Arshama letters have short Demotic addenda, as do some of the documents from the Jewish garrison community on Elephantine. A Demotic note added at the end of a detailed account in Aramaic specifying materials needed for repairs to a government boat implies that there was a duplicate in Egyptian.¹³⁵

3.4 Writing and Archiving

The Arshama dossier presents us with a problem. None of the documents¹³⁶ had been opened. So were their contents in fact ever known to anyone? Indications that they were include, first, a recurring reminder to the addressee that others are aware of the satrapal instructions: “Bagasrava knows this order (Aramaic *ṭ’m*’). Ahpepi is the scribe (Aramaic *spr*’).”¹³⁷ The reference is to two of the top officials in the administration. Individuals designated “scribes” did not themselves perform the physical act of writing, as shown by, for example, the fact that Rashta is labeled *spr*’ in five documents,¹³⁸ yet three different hands did the actual writing.¹³⁹ So there is a clear distinction to be made between the composer of a letter (or order) and the individual wielding the pen (or stylus) (cf. Corcoran, this volume). A possible way of rendering the former could be something like “senior secretary” or “chief secretary,” in the sense of a high official in the British civil service. The person described as “cognisant” of the letter’s contents appears also in Babylonian contexts¹⁴⁰ and the book of Ezra (4.8), as well as in the Egyptian satrapal system,¹⁴¹ seems to be very near the top of the administrative hierarchy and should perhaps be interpreted as “chancellor”; he always precedes the

official labeled “scribe.” His title in the Babylonian setting is *bēl tēmi*, where it can also be combined with the Akkadian title *sēpiru* “(parchment) scribe.” The title *bēl tēmi* is attested already in the Assyrian period (see Radner, this volume), but the specific office may be an innovation in the administrative organization of the Achaemenid period. The functional equivalent also surfaces in Elamite in the Persepolis Fortification archive,¹⁴² as well as in Demotic in the Memphis chancellery.¹⁴³

Second, a number of the letters state on the outside that there are several recipients, as in “From Arshama to Nakhthor, the steward, [Kenza]sirma and his colleagues the [account]ants (Aramaic *hmrkry*’ = Old Persian **hmarakara*) who are in Egypt.”¹⁴⁴ The title would again suggest an official administrative post.¹⁴⁵ A third indication is that in one instance, the writer, another Persian noble, instructs Nakhthor thus:

Now then, Varfish says thus: ‘Look, you consult Arshama’s letter, which was brought to Psamshek (the previous steward), concerning the Cilicians...’ (Driver 1956: no. 12: 3–4)

This can only mean that there were copies of the letters accessible to a number of individuals. How, otherwise, would Varfish know what had been written in a much earlier letter to a different recipient? As it is unimaginable that the Egyptian servant of someone of such high court and governmental standing as the Persian Arshama would simply ignore a communication from his master, there must have been at least one other copy/version of each letter. Keeping a sealed version of each would allow for quick retrieval by checking the address on the exterior of the letter, which frequently indicates the main thrust of the content, such as “From Prince Arshama to Artahant who is in Egypt. Concerning the Cilicians,... my... able... GN.”¹⁴⁶ And we should not forget the short Demotic notations added to the address of three other letters,¹⁴⁷ which may have served for reference.

Some sense of the complexities of interaction emerges from the Arshama correspondence and other material, such as who was in contact with whom and the clear awareness of previous communications. Thus, for example, Hananiah, an elder in Jerusalem writing to the Jewish community in Elephantine, appears to refer to the fact that in response to their appeal to the Egyptian governor about permission to perform a festival, the latter had contacted the king, who had granted the request, which had in turn been forwarded to Hananiah. He is now communicating further details to the Elephantine people as to how precisely the festival (very likely the Passover) is to be performed.¹⁴⁸ The procedure hinted at here is (a) the Jews on Elephantine write to Jerusalem about how and when the Passover should be performed; (b) they also write to Arshama for permission to continue celebrating it—perhaps there had been objections raised by

others about their absence from work; (c) Arshama contacts the king; (d) the king replies to Arshama giving his blessing; (e) Arshama's chancellery notifies Elephantine and Jerusalem of the royal decision; (f) Hananiah is now free to contact the leaders of the Elephantine community directly with detailed instructions for the celebration. Here we can see how a relatively minor affair will have generated quite a substantial quantity of correspondence.

More direct is an instance where Arshama orders his (probable) deputy in Egypt, Artavant (or Artahant), to act for him in response to a request made by a relative of his steward:

One called Psamshek, the son of Ahohapi, my steward, says here as follows: 'While I was coming to my lord [...] certain slaves of my father Ahohapi accompanying me (on my way) to my lord—he names them; then:) a total of 8 men—took my property and fled. Now then, if it please my lord, let word be sent to Artavant [concerning the servants mentioned] whom I shall present before him: may they receive the punishment which I set for them.' (Driver 1956: no. 3; Porten & Yardeni 1986–1994 1, A6.3)

Arshama, located at this point in either northern Babylonia or Elam, having summarized the situation, gives Artavant permission to grant Psamshek's request to inflict punishment on the recalcitrant slaves. Such citations from previous correspondence point to the density of correspondence conducted over very long distances.

One question for which only indirect evidence exists is the storing and retrieval of communications. The Persepolis Treasury Texts (section 1.4), named after their find spot, may have been kept in a now vanished upper story which could have served as an office or archive room.¹⁴⁹ But the two cramped rooms in the fortification wall, housing the thousands of Elamite texts in all their variety, cannot easily be visualized as a functioning archive,¹⁵⁰ but rather a depository. The existence of a satrapal archive is implied by a trilingual inscription from Xanthos in Lycia,¹⁵¹ dating almost certainly to 337 BC. It records, on its broad sides, a city decree setting up a new cult in the local languages of Lycian and Greek. On the narrow side of the monument is an endorsement in Aramaic, providing a satrapal guarantee to defend its provisions. The only way in which this could have worked is on the assumption that copies of the civic decision were deposited in the local government archive to which the citizens could appeal, if there were an infringement of the regulations in the future.¹⁵² It is precisely such a situation that is envisaged in the book of Ezra, where the right of the Judaeans to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem was challenged by their neighbors. In response, the satrap investigated the situation. As the Judaeans claimed to have received permission

from Cyrus the Great to carry out this work, he asked that a search for such an authorization be instituted:

‘Your Majesty, let a search be made in the royal archives in Babylon to discover whether a decree was issued by King Cyrus for the rebuilding of this house of god in Jerusalem. Let the king send us his pleasure in this matter.’ Then King Darius issued an order, and search was made in the archives where the treasures were deposited in Babylon. But it was in Ecbatana, in the royal residence in the province of Media, that a scroll was found on which was written the following memorandum. (Cyrus’s edict follows; Ezra 5.17–6.2)

However skeptical one may be about the historicity of the episode, the effectiveness of the story depends on the fact that such procedures were in existence.¹⁵³

3.5 Authentication

Seals played the crucial role of authenticating orders and communications, as shown by the frequent references in the Persepolis tablets to “sealed documents” (section 3.3). A complex system of sealing and counter-sealing was in use in the assignment and issuing of rations.¹⁵⁴ While many were office seals,¹⁵⁵ others were clearly personal to high-ranking individuals (Fig. 5.6), as in this letter sent out by Parnakka, head of the administration in Fars:

Tell Ushaya, the “wine handler”, Parnakka spoke thus: (...) ¹⁵⁶ Also, the seal that formerly (was) mine has been lost. Now this seal (is) mine that has been impressed on this tablet.¹⁵⁷ Shakshabanush wrote. He received the *dumme* from Pilidan.¹⁵⁸ Year 22 (Darius I), month III, on day 16. (PF 2067)

This makes the important role played by seals as authenticators exceptionally clear. Although the sealing is not referred to, the Arshama documents all bear what is clearly the satrap’s very fine personal seal (Fig. 5.7), its style well attested in Persepolis.¹⁵⁹ A similarly beautiful seal of a type familiar from the empire’s center is preserved on one of the documents from Bactria.¹⁶⁰

Royal missives were equipped with the royal seal,¹⁶¹ which was clearly recognizable, as allusions to it indicate. Cyrus the Younger’s appointment to an overarching command on the Asia Minor coast in c. 408 BC was announced to the populace at large in a letter equipped with the royal seal.¹⁶² The potency of the royal seal to command obedience is beautifully illustrated by an episode described by Herodotus. After Darius I had succeeded in establishing himself firmly on the throne following extensive opposition at home and in many parts of the empire (522–521 BC), he had to find a way of dealing with governors linked to the displaced régime but still in post. One of these was Oroites, satrap of Lydia, who was in a powerful position and blatantly refused to acknowledge

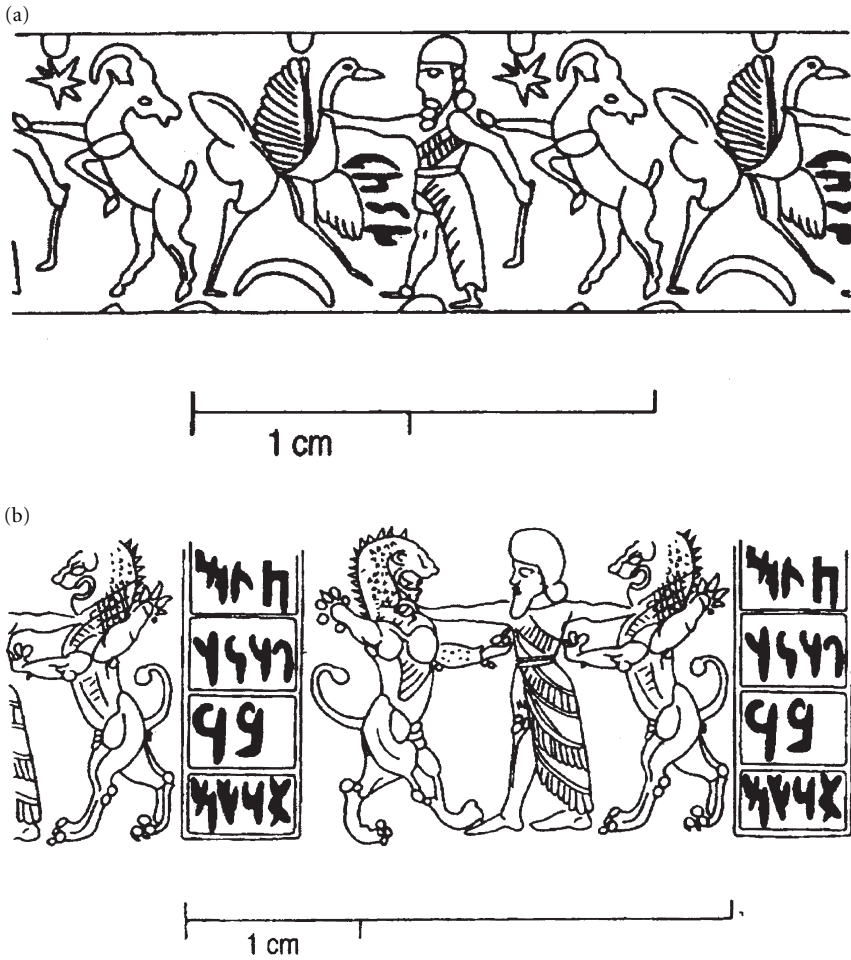


FIGURE 5.6. Parnakka's two seals. Drawings courtesy of M. B. Garrison & M. C. Root.

the new incumbent on the throne, by (allegedly) murdering his messenger (see section 3.2 with n. 118). Darius's position was still vulnerable, so the use of brute military force was risky. Instead, a certain Bagaïos was appointed who acted thus:

He had many letters written concerning all kinds of matters and sealed them with Darius' seal; with these he went to Sardes. On arrival he came into Oroites' presence and, taking the letters out, he gave them one by one to the royal secretary to read (all the governors had royal secretaries).¹⁶³ Bagaïos did this to test the bodyguard, to see if they were likely to rise against Oroites.¹⁶⁴ When he saw that they regarded the letters with great respect and had even greater respect for their contents, he gave



FIGURE 5.7. *Arshama's seal. Bodleian Library Oxford, shelfmark: Pell Aram. I-XV. © The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, with permission.*

them another one in which was the following message: “Persians, King Darius orders you not to guard Oroites.” On hearing this they laid down their spears. Bagaïos, seeing how they obeyed the letters, took courage and gave the last letter to the secretary in which was written: “King Darius orders the Persians in Sardeis to kill Oroites.” As soon as they heard this, the bodyguard drew their daggers and killed him instantly. (Hdt. III 128)

3.6 Ceremonies of Communication

In the passage quoted above, the king in his letter addresses the bodyguard simply as “Persians,” as is appropriate in a royal order. In Parnakka’s letter (section 3.5), again an order from a superior to lower-ranking official, the form is: “To PN_1 ... PN_2 speaks as follows.” Despite not being quite such a blunt order, Xerxes’s letter to Pausanias of Sparta (n. 84) is said to have run: “Thus speaks King Xerxes to Pausanias.” The relative social position of individuals can be

deduced from the various forms of address employed, and the Arshama dossier provides telling instances of this. Arshama's court rank was of the highest order. His Aramaic title *br byt'*, literally "son of the house," found also in Akkadian and Demotic, renders Old Persian **visapuθra* and is given on the outside of the parchments. It did not necessarily mean that the title holder was a member of the royal family, but reflected the closeness of the holder to the center of power, and, as individuals in such a position could be eligible to marry royal daughters, they could technically enter the royal family.¹⁶⁵ The term is thus best translated "prince." In four of his letters,¹⁶⁶ Arshama writes to another Persian, Artavant. The latter's title is not given—he is simply referred to on the outside of the letter as "(the one) who is in Egypt." That he must have occupied a very high position, perhaps even that of deputy to Arshama, emerges from the manner of Arshama's opening: "From Arshama to Artavant. I send you abundant (greetings of) peace and prosperity," before progressing to explain what are essentially his orders. In contrast, when Arshama is writing to his estate stewards and other servants, the letters simply begin: "From Arshama to PN. Now then (Aramaic *wk't*)...." Exactly the same form of address is used by two other Persian nobles (precise titles unknown), Varuvahya and Varfish,¹⁶⁷ when they write to Arshama's steward Nakhthor. But another Persian, Artahaya, writes to him as an equal,¹⁶⁸ expressing the kind of warm wishes for his well-being that Arshama used to address Artavant, before going on to acknowledge the receipt of goods sent to him by Nakhthor. Careful attention to rank thus clearly dictated the choice of address; conversely, the form of address shows, without further indications, the relative rank of writer and addressee. The etiquette involved evokes Herodotus's brief, perhaps somewhat oversimplified, description of Persian forms of greeting:

When they (sc. the Persians) encounter each other in the street, there is a way of recognizing whether those meeting are of the same rank. Because instead of hailing each other, they kiss on the mouth. If one is a little lower in status than the other, they kiss on the cheek. But if one is a great deal lower in standing than the other, he falls to the ground and pays homage to the other (Greek *prospipton proskunei ton heteron*). (Hdt. I 134)

IN CONCLUSION: THE POWER OF THE KING'S WORD

Although we have no single indisputable example of a royal letter of the type so well attested in, for example, the Hellenistic period (see Bencivenni, this volume), there is a very clear sense of the king as the overarching authority in all matters of running the empire. We already considered the example of the

so-called Passover Letter (section 3.4), and this can be supplemented with the many instances where matters are referred back to the king before any decisive action is taken. A good example is the occasion when Aristagoras, son-in-law of the tyrant of Miletus, proposed a Persian attack on the island of Naxos to Artaphernes, the Persian governor in Sardeis, in 499 BC. Artaphernes's guarded response was:

Your suggestions are good for the king's house. In all of this, what you advise, is good (...) But the king himself must also give his consent to all of this. (Hdt. 5.31)

In other words, the plan would not be put into action unless it received royal approval. Proposals for action would normally be communicated by letter, as when Orontas, nominally a supporter of Artaxerxes II's rebellious brother Cyrus the Younger, offered to go over to the king's side.¹⁶⁹ Time and again, we hear that particular military actions are being undertaken by generals "on the king's orders,"¹⁷⁰ or that nothing contrary to such instructions could be done.¹⁷¹ When a commander acted in a given situation as seemed appropriate on his own authority, he took care to hasten to court in order to justify his action to the king and tried to obtain retrospective approval, as Tiribazus did in the course of the complex Persian negotiations with Sparta and Athens in 392/391 BC.¹⁷²

Suspicious activity was reported, ideally, in person to the king,¹⁷³ who might summon the suspect to court in order to explain himself, as when Cambyses' brother was accused of plotting against him.¹⁷⁴ If such accusations were vindicated, rewards could be substantial.¹⁷⁵ Communicating good news, of course, met with royal favor, and individuals were anxious to be its bearers.¹⁷⁶ To have performed a service for the king brought benefits, which is what Pausanias of Sparta was angling for when he wrote to Xerxes.¹⁷⁷ Several stories report that the king had a list or book of "royal benefactors."¹⁷⁸ Implicitly this is what Artaphernes is referring to when he says that Aristagoras's plan will be "good for the king's house." And in Xerxes's response to Pausanias he is said to have written: "Your act (...) will count as an act of benefaction for you, recorded for ever in our house."¹⁷⁹ Such anecdotes remind one of a passage in two royal inscriptions laying out the kingly virtues (DNb; XPl): "The man who cooperates, him do I (sc. the king) reward according to his cooperation."

The king moved through his realm both to make his presence visible and to reassert ties of loyalty.¹⁸⁰ On these occasions, it seems that he could be approached relatively informally by subjects and receive their petitions.¹⁸¹ But normally the process of gaining an audience with the king was a long-drawn-out business, with people reportedly waiting months, even years, before gaining admission.¹⁸²

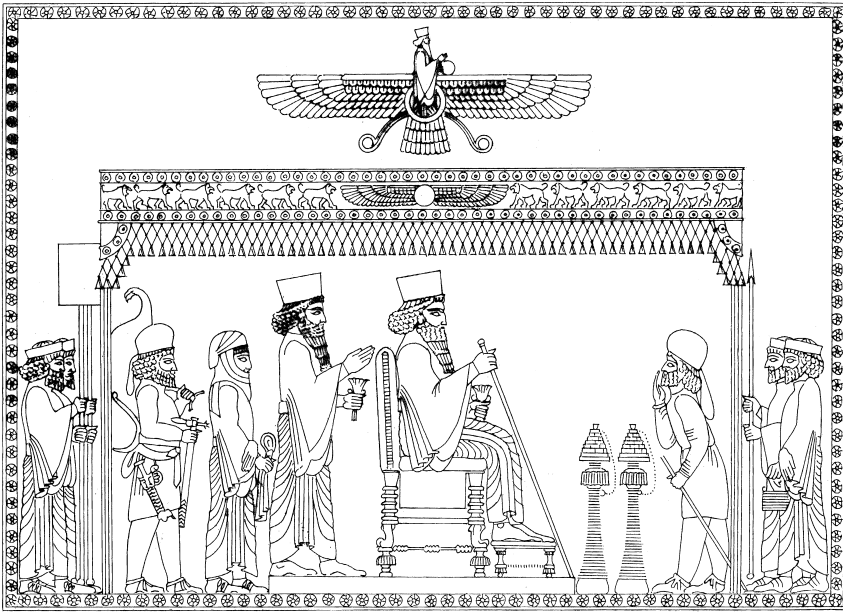


FIGURE 5.8. *Persepolis audience relief*. Drawing by Tessa Rickards.

The formalities to be gone through and the etiquette to be observed feature in a variety of classical stories and are mirrored in the “audience reliefs” at Persepolis (Fig. 5.8). They show the king enthroned with the crown prince behind him, surrounded by body servants and armed guards. More soldiers and courtiers cluster around him as he faces an official bowing and proffering the ceremonial kiss. Behind the latter, embassies from subject lands are held back by ushers, as they await the invitation to enter into the royal presence. This image circulated widely in the empire and was among the iconographic features with which most people will have been familiar.¹⁸³ Direct approach, as indicated here, was impossible; requests to be admitted had to be vetted, before being forwarded or not, through a high official, often perhaps the commander of the royal bodyguard (Greek *chiliarch*; Old Persian **hazarapatiš*). Only after admission had been granted was the individual or delegation conducted before the throne by a palace usher, with their hands reportedly concealed in the sleeves of their garments.¹⁸⁴ Once in the royal presence, subjects were expected to bow low and offer the kiss, although the precise degree of “prostration” will have depended on individual status, as Herodotus indicates (section 3.6).¹⁸⁵

The royal presence was not, however, solely manifested in the king’s physical presence, but also in his communications. Royal letters, identified by the sealing (section 3.5), were read out, before being stored. To be the recipient of one was a

high honor, as high as being in the presence of the king himself, as suggested by this anecdote about the general Datames:

After laying siege to Sinope (in northern Turkey), Datames received a letter from the king, giving orders to raise the siege immediately. He obeyed the orders as soon as he had read the letter, paid homage (Greek *proskynesis*) to the letter and made the sacrifice normally offered for good news, as though having received from the king a singular favour, embarked and left the enterprise. (Polyaenus *Strat.* VII 21,5)

Although only reported in a late source, it illustrates perfectly the way in which the “king’s word” was heard and obeyed throughout the length and breadth of the empire’s vast terrains.

The King's Words: Hellenistic Royal Letters in Inscriptions

Alice Bencivenni¹

THIS chapter deals with royal correspondence in the Hellenistic period. Investigating this material means participating in an ongoing debate about the nature of kingship in the different Graeco-Macedonian kingdoms as they emerged after the conquests and death of Alexander the Great (r. 336–323 BC). Historians have long focused their attention on kings and their courts within these states, guided mainly by the literary sources, which tend to concentrate on events and which largely pass over the institutional details that shaped kingship post-Alexander in those territories where Greek cities (πόλεις) old and new prevailed.² This holds particularly true for Macedonia, where until quite recently no other kind of source inquiry existed to make up for the deficiency of the literary tradition.³ The Ptolemaic kingdom is not affected by the same scarcity of documentary sources, for here we can rely on the rich treasure provided by the papyri. A number of pioneering analyses have been devoted to exploring the administrative features of an area whose geographical and institutional structure raises specific questions, because of the scarcity of πόλεις within Egypt itself, and the need to administer its external possessions.⁴ The institutions of the Seleukids were treated in Bickerman's exemplary monograph of 1938, still a main work of reference on the subject, but here in particular the nature of the relationship between the king and the cities of western Asia Minor soon became the subject of a heated debate that continues to this day.⁵

More recent work has concentrated in particular on describing in detail the nature of the Macedonian state,⁶ the different institutional features of each Hellenistic kingdom,⁷ and the political meaning of the relationship between the court and the Greek cities within its boundaries.⁸ Long-established πόλεις, as well as new foundations of Alexander and his Successors, are a characteristic aspect of the Hellenistic kingdoms.⁹ As the epigraphic documents increasingly demonstrate, cities must be taken into account in order to comprehend the nature of the Hellenistic state (and, more generally, the Hellenistic world). For this reason the study of the letters written by the Hellenistic rulers, nearly half of which are addressed to the governing bodies within the cities themselves, is

now a major point of interest. Out of this have emerged a number of important projects whose aim is the renewal of the main epigraphic corpus on the subject, the *Royal Correspondence in the Hellenistic Period: A Study in Greek Epigraphy*, by Charles Bradford Welles (1934). Biagio Virgilio has recently published a preliminary study of the correspondence of the Hellenistic kings and, following Welles's criteria to the letter, is preparing a new edition of all royal letters attested "in Asia or on islands in Asiatic waters."¹⁰

The material that makes up the royal correspondence of the Hellenistic period comprises documents written by Alexander, by the Hellenistic rulers (i.e. Alexander's successors, kings, queens, and dynasts), and by their officials. Virgilio includes in his survey c. 440 royal letters attested mainly through Greek inscriptions, Greek papyri, and—less frequently—literary sources.¹¹ This total includes both complete and fragmentary documents, counted as separate texts even if they formed part of a dossier, and references to royal letters in a variety of sources (*testimonia*). Such a large volume (which is, moreover, still growing) can scarcely be dealt with in one single corpus. In addition, the fact that, in the past, the different media (stone, papyrus, literary texts) were usually dealt with separately by specialists of the relevant disciplines, makes it harder, though no less desirable, to envisage a comprehensive collection.¹² Indeed, Virgilio plans to publish a corpus in two volumes containing only the texts from Asia Minor and the Near East (about 210 letters).

This chapter will focus on epigraphic sources. Except for some minor references to Macedonia and Egypt, the bulk of the discussion will concentrate on Asia Minor and the Near East from the 3rd century BC to the end of the 2nd century BC, respecting a geographical and chronological division which has long been regarded as useful by scholars dealing with Hellenistic kingship.¹³ The correspondence written by the Seleukids and the Attalids, in particular, will be object of enquiry, for a total of 147 documents epigraphically attested.¹⁴ This chapter is based on the study of 103 documents relating to the Seleukid and 44 relating to the Attalid state correspondence, commemorated in 69 and 28 inscriptions, respectively. All these documents are listed in the catalogues in the appendix, and in the following, Seleukid documents are quoted as **S1-69** and Attalid texts as **A1-28**, according to the catalogue. The find spots of these inscriptions are indicated in the maps (Fig. 6.1 for the Seleukid letters; Fig. 6.2 for the Attalid letters).

The political and administrative communication of the Seleukid and Attalid kingdoms—between a king and a city (or a community settled in or near a city), a king and his officials, the royal officials and a city, or even among royal subordinates of different levels—depended strictly upon the diplomatic instruments employed by the parties involved. In the period under examination, these are mainly royal letters (ἐπιστολαί) from the royal chanceries (including letters by officials), civic decrees (ψηφίσματα) and petitions (ὑπομήματα) conveyed

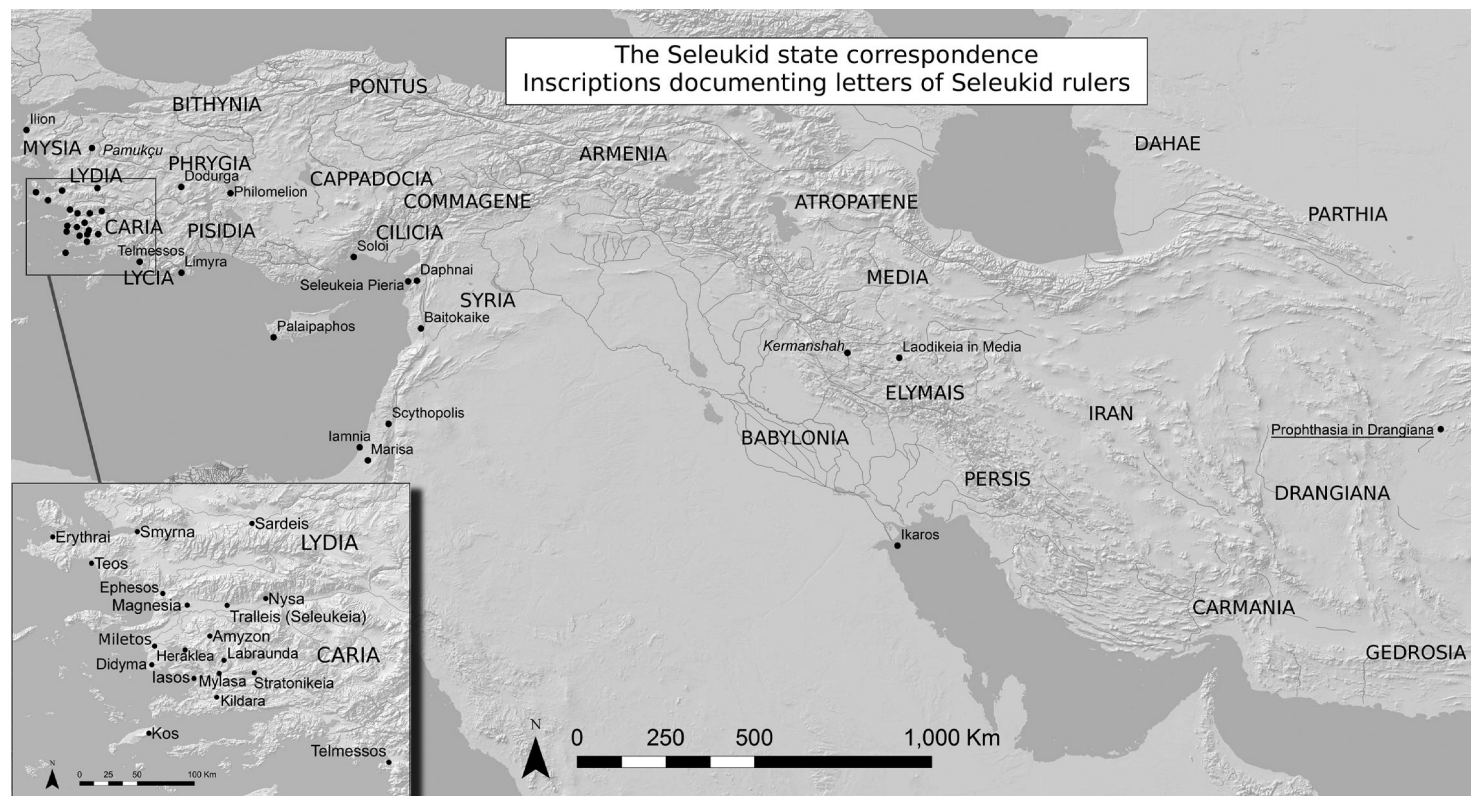


FIGURE 6.1. Map indicating the find spots of inscriptions documenting letters of the Seleukid state correspondence. Map prepared by Alessio Palmisano after a sketch of the author.

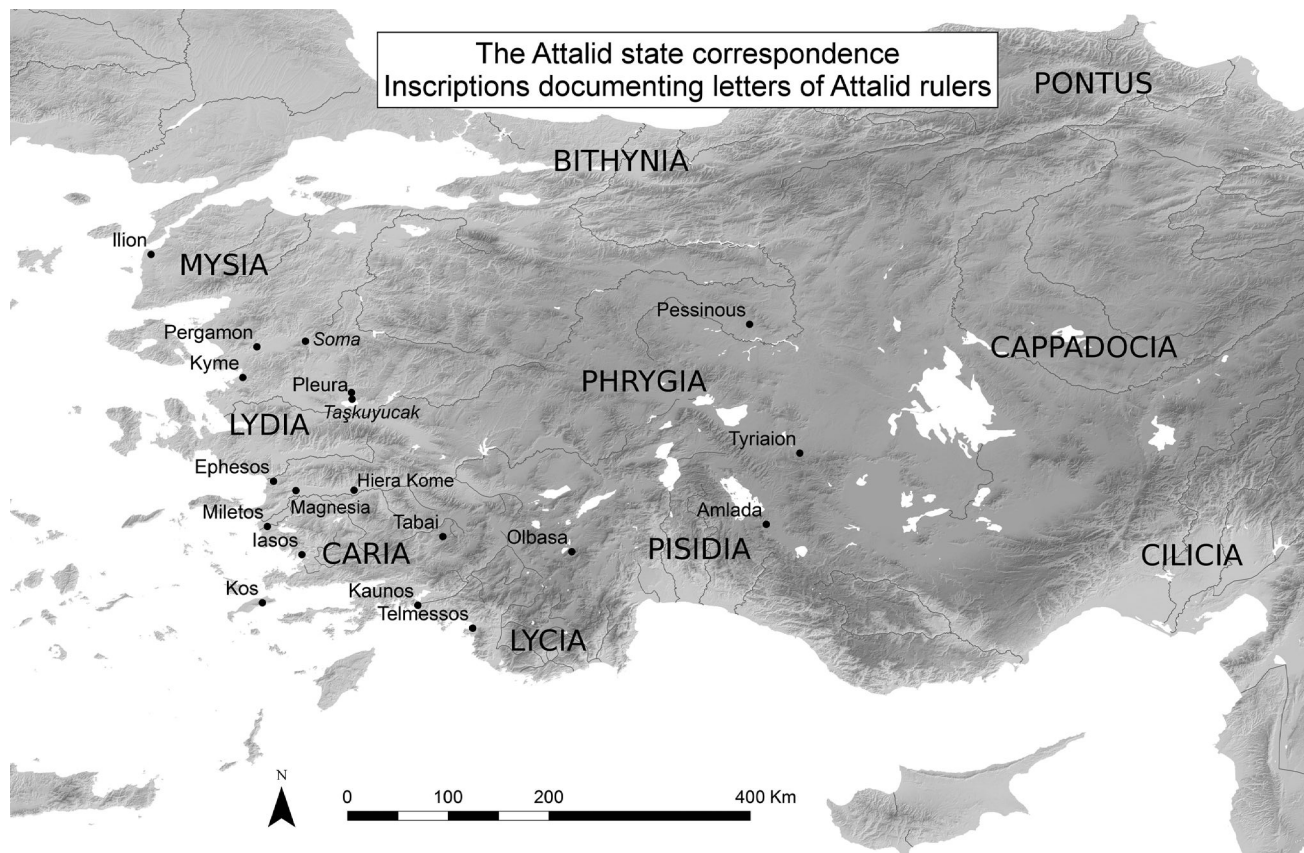


FIGURE 6.2. Map indicating the find spots of inscriptions documenting letters of the Attalid state correspondence. Map prepared by Alessio Palmisano after a sketch of the author.

by ambassadors, envoys, and officials from sender to recipient.¹⁵ In spite of epigraphic references to the use of *προστάγματα* (ordinances) by the Attalids (Fig. 6.3)¹⁶ and of *διαγράμματα* (regulations) by the Seleukids,¹⁷ the surviving documents themselves are in the form of letters. The word *πρόσταγμα* attested in a number of epigraphic dossiers, which group together several Seleukid royal documents, is used by subordinate officials to refer to the king's orders, which were, however, always composed in the form of a letter (and were referred to as letters by the king himself).¹⁸ The only exception to the use of *πρόσταγμα* by a Seleukid king is a papyrus containing a fragmentary *πρόσταγμα* enacted by Antiochos IV in 169 BC, during his ephemeral reign over Egypt, which starts with *βασιλέως Αντιόχου προστάξαντος* ("by order of the king Antiochos"), a *variatio* of the formula *βασιλέως προστάξαντος* ("by order of the king") employed at the beginning of Ptolemaic *προστάγματα*.¹⁹ According to a classification proposed over seventy years ago by Elias Bickerman (which is still adequate),²⁰ we can distinguish two further types of Seleukid royal documents—*ὑπομνηματισμός* (written report of a royal order; **S68b**) and *ἐντολή* (letter with several recipients; **S39**, and probably **S42**). Both have features that are formally very similar to letters.²¹ It is worthy of note, however, that scholars usually include four *ὑπομνήματα* (petitions) by officials and cities among the body of Seleukid and Attalid royal correspondence, because in antiquity they were attached to royal letters and so were included in what we call "dossiers."²²

Two preliminary issues will be addressed first: why royal letters attested in inscriptions have survived, and how they may be classified. Then I shall turn to the communication strategies employed in transmitting the Hellenistic king's wishes, especially with reference to the Seleukid kingdom, which, given its vast dimensions, needed, much more than any other realm, effective means to communicate information.

1 THE QUESTION OF SURVIVAL

The peculiar state of our findings must be taken into account. For Egypt and the Ptolemaic kingdom there exist royal letters (*ἐπιστολαί*) and ordinances (*προστάγματα* and epistolary *προστάγματα*) written on papyri or carved on stone: the inscription of a king's letter was due to the initiative of a city²³ or granted by the king himself.²⁴ Ordinances issued by the kings, often published with an accompanying letter requiring their inscription,²⁵ were regularly archived as documents on papyrus, as were royal letters.²⁶ For Asia Minor and the Near East (and indeed for Macedonia) royal correspondence is only and obviously attested on inscriptions, since the climate and territory in these areas do not favor the preservation of papyrus except in a few rare circumstances. This material, however, was undoubtedly used at the time alongside parchment or leather, whose specific use for official letters is attested in the Seleukid



FIGURE 6.3. White marble stele inscribed with a letter of Attalos II to Athenaios, the king's cousin and official, a letter of Attalos III to Cyzicos and a letter of Attalos III to the city of Pergamon, preceded by a decree issued by Pergamon (142, 135 and 135 BC); discovered in Pergamon in the north stoa of the temple of Athena: **A27**. Pergamonmuseum, inv. no. IvP 248. © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Antikensammlung. Photograph by Gerhard Kunze. Courtesy Sylvia Brehme.

kingdom through the historical narrative of one astronomical diary on a cuneiform tablet from Babylon.²⁷ The consequence is that only a selection of all the Seleukid and Attalid pieces of official communication written in antiquity has survived until the present day, and most of these documents were inscribed not by order of the king or sender, but by the recipient.²⁸ Only in exceptional cases, when a Seleukid or an Attalid king wrote a letter, did he also prescribe that his words were to be inscribed.

Letters, by their nature and origin, do not require inscription on a long-lasting material. Arising from private communication and attested in the Greek world as far back as the 6th century, they were widely used for official communication only from the 4th century onward, though earlier examples are known as a result of diplomatic contacts with the East.²⁹ The “founder” of the official use of letters may be considered to have been Philip II of Macedonia (r. 359–336 BC).³⁰ His passion for letters was inherited by his son Alexander (r. 336–323 BC), and was taken up, along with other diplomatic forms first used at the Macedonian court, by the Hellenistic dynasties.³¹ Seleukos I (r. 305–281 BC), according to an anecdote reported by Plutarch, already complained about the excessive number of letters a king had to write.³²

The inscribing on stone of the king’s letter was most often carried out, together with any civic decree (or, in rare cases, petition), by initiative of the city or community that received the official letter. The same happened when the sender was an official who was writing to a city on behalf of his sovereign or when the letter was written by a dynast. The king, imitated by the official and emulated by the dynast, usually drew up his correspondence addressed to the city without prescribing the publication of his words on a long-lasting material. The absence of royal instructions about publication applies both in the case of “autonomous” or “free” cities,³³ and in the case of “subordinate” recipients.³⁴ It was the city, once it had received a communication from the royal chancery, that decided upon the inscription, on marble or stone stelae—sometimes with a pediment or molding above—on a wall of a public or sacred building (Fig. 6.3–6.8), and paid its costs.

Needless to say, this decision was taken only when the king’s words were favorable and helpful for the city itself.³⁵ This is significantly demonstrated by the inscription on stone of a letter of Lysimachos in which the king of Thrace and Macedonia decided in favor of Samos against Priene during the endless territorial controversy that opposed the two cities for centuries: the stele from Samos survives (283/282 BC, Fig. 6.4),³⁶ while the same document is conspicuous by its absence from the walls of the rich “archive” temple of Athena Polias in Priene, where plenty of documents relating to the same controversy are engraved.³⁷ Undoubtedly the city held a perishable copy in its archives: in the famous Rhodian arbitration of 196–192 BC between Samos and Priene, royal letters, but not the hostile one by Lysimachos, were produced as proof by the Prienians.³⁸

Something similar happened in Labraunda, where a letter of Olympichos, στρατηγός (governor) of Seleukos II, to the city of Mylasa (S13; Fig. 6.5) was inscribed on the anta of the Zeus temple by the triumphant city after the king declared mendacious the charges that the priest Korris had brought against the city. The king’s earlier letter to his στρατηγός, in which the priest’s charges had been accepted, was also inscribed on the temple wall, presumably around 242 BC on Korris’s initiative (S11).

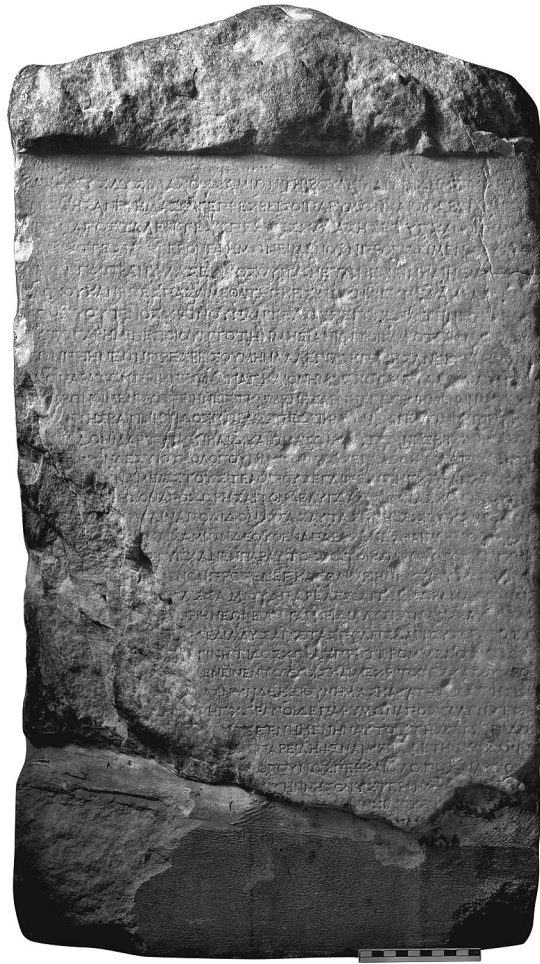


FIGURE 6.4 White marble stele inscribed with a letter of Lysimachos, king of Thrace and Macedonia, to the city of Samos (283/2 BC); found at Samos: OGIS I: 13; RC 7; Magonetto 1997: no. 20, IG 12.6:155. Ashmolean Museum, inv. no. 2–25. © The Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, and the Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents. Courtesy Charles Crowther.

Charles Bradford Welles noted how this publication was carried out, mostly with speed and regularity, by the cities, and thought that the act of inscribing was both a sign of respect for the king and a guarantee of the privileges they had been granted; royal letters caused political, economic, and religious changes and therefore deserved permanent display, just like civic laws and decrees.³⁹

The few Seleukid and Attalid letters with a “publication clause,” to borrow a term more suitable for civic decrees, are addressed by the king to his officials or

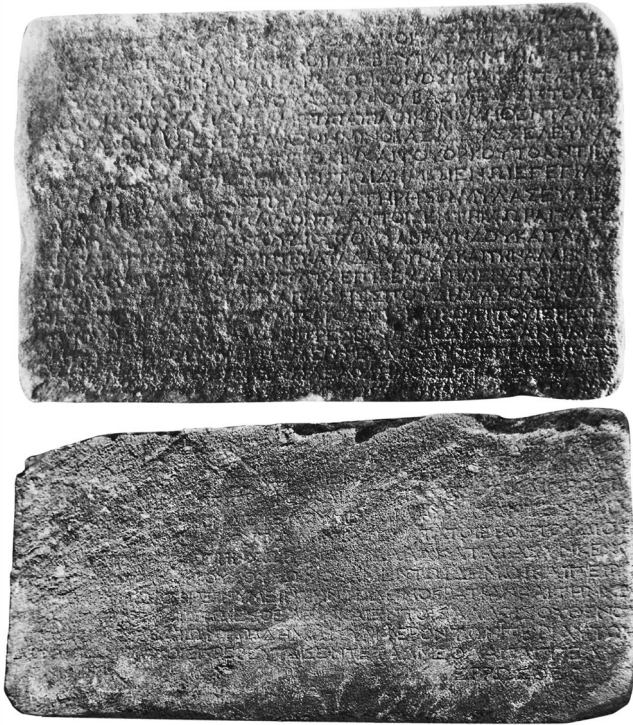


FIGURE 6.5 Two joining blocks originally from the northwest anta of the Zeus sanctuary of Labraunda, inscribed with a letter of Olympichos, strategos of king Seleukos II, to the city of Mylasa (242/1 BC?); excavated at Labraunda and kept on site (excavation numbers 6/A 91 and 7/A 98): S13. © Labraunda Excavations. Courtesy Pontus Hellström.

to groups of people, not incorporated into a city, whose dealings were directly with the king. Some letters of the Seleukid and Attalid chanceries, while showing that the king might, in certain specific cases, require his communication to be inscribed, also show that the identity of the recipient was a condition for the presence of the clause. If the practice of publishing was generally related to the content of the letters themselves (as already noted by Welles, who made a distinction between letters granting privileges, which were regularly published by the city, and administrative orders, which were inscribed only in exceptional cases at the expense of the king⁴⁰), the presence of the formula for the inscription on stone (never attested in documents addressed to a city⁴¹) is directly related to the recipient's status. Only two Attalid letters granting privileges have the inscription clause, and both are addressed to groups: in one case to military settlers close to a city (Pergamon or Tralleis), most likely under Eumenes II (r. 197–158/157 BC; A7⁴²), and the other to the κοινόν (guild) of the Dionysiac

artists based in Teos during the reign of Eumenes II (A16). Letters with administrative orders addressed to officials normally did not have the inscription clause but were inscribed on the initiative of the city that stood to benefit by the king's decisions or judgments.⁴³ The peculiar state of the evidence, only epigraphic, explains in part the relatively low number of surviving documents addressed to officials: 11 out of 44 for the Attalids, and 43 out of 103 for the Seleukids (many more may have been stored in the royal archives and in the archives of single officials).⁴⁴

It is worth noting that in Asia Minor and in the Near East for what seems like a limited period of time there was royal interest, Seleukid in particular, in having at least some correspondence inscribed in stone. The list includes:

- S7: a dossier of documents concerning the sale of a village and lands to queen Laodike by Antiochos II from Miletos, sanctuary of Didyma: a letter of Metrophanes to an unknown official to which is attached a letter of the king to Metrophanes and a boundary delimitation (254/253 BC);
- S32: a letter of Antiochos III to his viceroy Zeuxis about the appointment of Nikanor as high priest (ἀρχιερεύς) for all the sanctuaries in western Asia Minor, attached to a letter of Zeuxis to Philotas, which in turn is attached to a letter of Philotas to Bithys (copy from modern Pamukçu, in Mysia, of 209 BC);⁴⁵
- S44: a letter of the Seleukid official Ikadion to Anaxarchos, attached to a letter of the official Anaxarchos to the οἰκηταί (inhabitants) of the island of Ikaros, modern Failaka in the Persian Gulf (203/202? BC);⁴⁶
- S49: a dossier from Scythopolis, modern Hefzibah, with six letters of Antiochos III to his officials and two ὑπομνήματα of Ptolemy son of Thraseas addressed to this king (202/201 and 199–195 BC);⁴⁷
- S55: a letter of Antiochos III to Anaximbrotos about the establishment of a cult of queen Laodike and the appointment of Berenike, daughter of Ptolemy, son of Lysimachos, as high priestess for the queen in Phrygia, which is attached to a letter of Anaximbrotos to Dionytas (copy from Dodurga, between Phrygia and Caria, of 193 BC);⁴⁸
- S58: a letter of Antiochos III to an official about the appointment of his φίλος (friend) as high priest (ἀρχιερεύς) in Daphnai (189 BC);
- S59a: a letter of Antiochos III to an official (?) found in Nysa;
- S66: a letter of Seleukos IV to his chief minister Heliodoros about the appointment of Olympiodoros to the satrapy of Coele-Syria and Phoenicia, which is attached to a letter of Heliodoros to Dorymenes, governor (?) of the satrapy of Coele-Syria and Phoenicia, which in turn is attached to a letter of Dorymenes to his subordinate Diophanes; from Marisa, modern Maresha in Israel (178 BC; Fig. 6.6);

S68: a dossier from Baitokaike (modern Hosn Suleiman) in Syria: a letter of a king Antiochos to Euphemos with an attached ὑπομνηματισμός granting privileges to the sanctuary of Zeus in Baitokaike (after 162 BC).

With the exception of the first and the last documents on the list, all the surviving Seleukid letters whose publication was ordered by the king belong to the age of Antiochos III (r. 223–187 BC) or Seleukos IV (r. 187–175 BC). One may compare the near-contemporary affection for (inscribed) διαγράμματα of the Antigonid king Philip V (r. 221–179 BC).⁴⁹ Four out of these nine Seleukid documents are of a special type, which may be called the letter-πρόσταγμα: a letter from a purely formal point of view—with greeting formula at the beginning, inscription clause, and date at the end (with no final greeting)—but in terms of its content identified as an “order” (πρόσταγμα) by the officials who received it and, in turn, had to transmit it to their own subordinates (this typology can be appreciated only when dossiers of documents are preserved).⁵⁰ To underline the epistolary character of the text, the king usually expresses his orders by justifying them through a complex set of reasons.⁵¹ In these “order-letters” decisions are usually wide-ranging or at least concern an entire administrative district.

When a king ordered the drafting of a stone copy of his letter, formally placing such instructions at the end of the text, this usually implied his financial contribution not only to cover the costs in the case of letters concerning the administration of the kingdom (as one would expect), but also in the case of letters granting privileges to specific groups of individuals, such as in the letter of Attalos (185 BC), the brother of king Eumenes II, addressed to an unknown official, where the privilege of publishing seems to be added to the other royal φιλότιμα granted to the inhabitants settled in the sanctuary of Apollo Tarsenos in the Kaikos valley (**A11a**).⁵²

2 WHAT KIND OF CATEGORIZATION CAN BE APPLIED TO SELEUKID AND ATTALID LETTERS?

Apart from the formal distinction suggested above between Seleukid letters and letter-προστάγματα, traditional categorization distinguishes letters addressed to Greek cities and communities on the one hand, and letters addressed to state officials on the other.⁵³ The first group would include diplomatic documents, pertaining to the relationship between the king and a political body with sufficient operating autonomy; the other, administrative correspondence conveying the king's wish directly from ruler to subordinate or among subordinates who share the same power of injunction as the king (clearly stated by the recurring use of the verb συντάσσω). This distinction, based on the recipient's identity, is effective if one compares the language of the two groups: polite, elaborate, and

marked by euergetism in the first case;⁵⁴ direct and laconic in the second. The case of the Seleukid letter-*προστάγματα* must be kept apart, since here the king, although addressing officials, becomes terse and, gradually, more and more talkative,⁵⁵ as can be appreciated from the beginning of the following document by King Seleukos IV:

King Seleukos to Heliodoros, his brother, greetings. Taking the utmost consideration for the safety of our subjects, and thinking it to be of the greatest good for the affairs in our realm when those living in our kingdom manage their life without fear, and at the same time realizing that nothing can enjoy its fitting prosperity without the good will of the gods, from the outset we have made it our concern to ensure that the sanctuaries founded in the other satrapies receive the traditional honors with the care befitting them. But since the affairs in Coele-Syria and Phoenicia stand in need of appointing someone to take care of these (i.e. sanctuaries), we observed that Olympiodoros would prudently see to their proper conduct... (S66; translation after Cotton & Wörrle 2007 and Jones 2009; Fig. 6.6).

The differences between the two registers are even more telling if chosen from the correspondence of the same ruler. The kings for whom correspondence survives both to cities and officials are, for the Seleukids, Seleukos I,⁵⁶ tentatively Antiochos I,⁵⁷ Seleukos II,⁵⁸ and, extensively, Antiochos III;⁵⁹ and for the Attalids, Attalos I,⁶⁰ Eumenes II,⁶¹ Attalos II,⁶² and Attalos III.⁶³ This distinction emerges clearly when we compare Seleukos II writing to Miletos (at the very beginning of his reign, 246 BC) and to his *στρατηγός* Olympichos (c. 240 BC) and add, as a typical example of abrupt communication to an official, the letter of Antiochos III to Ptolemy, son of Thraseas:

King Seleukos to the council and the people of Miletus, greetings. Whereas our ancestors and our father have conferred many great benefactions upon your city because of the oracles given out from the sanctuary there of Apollo Didymeus and because of kinship to the god himself, and also because of the gratitude of your people; whereas from your other measures taken with reference to our state in the past—these have been pointed out by our father's friends—and from the speech delivered by your envoys Glaucippus and Diomander who brought the holy wreath from the sanctuary with which you had crowned us, we ourselves see that you preserve sincere and firm your esteem for your friends and that you remember the favors which you have received, we approved your policy, and as we both desired and considered it very important to raise [your city] to a more illustrious state and [to increase your present] privileges [in the way you desire...] (S8; translation after Welles, RC 22).

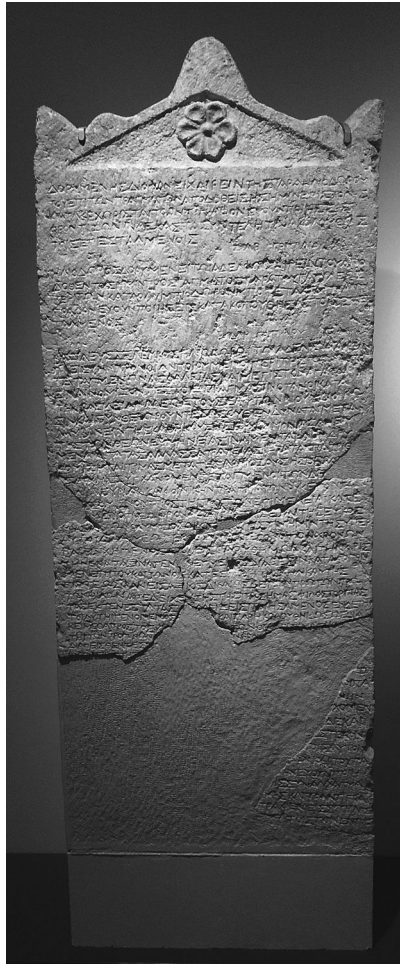


FIGURE 6.6. Limestone stele inscribed with a letter of Dorymenes, governor (?) of the satrapy of Coele-Syria and Phoenicia, to his subordinate Diophanes, a letter of Heliodoros, chief minister of Seleukos IV, to Dorymenes and a letter of Seleukos IV to Heliodoros (178 BC); the fragments C, D and E were excavated at Maresha, ancient Marisa, while the fragments A and B are from a private collection: S66. Israel Museum Jerusalem. Photograph by ל׳ ל׳ via Wikimedia Commons.

[King Seleukos to Olympichos, greetings.] Korris, the priest of Zeus Labraundos, has written to us that the Mylasans have improperly taken away some portions of the sacred land for themselves, portions which had previously been administered by him by virtue of his ancestral privileges, that the Mylasans were keeping the products for themselves and that they behaved badly, because they alone are not willing to give the perquisites,

which are due to him from those offering sacrifices. If indeed this is how matters stand, then, it seems to us not to be right. In any case, do not even now permit the Mylasans in any way to encroach on anything belonging [to the shrine] and to the priest. For we decree that the concessions made [to Korris by virtue of his ancestral privileges] shall remain in this and in [all] other matters... (S11; author's translation).

King Antiochos to Ptolemy, greetings. [- - - us (?), give orders] to expose the letters, being inscribed on stone stelai, in [the villages] which belong to you. [We have written] about this matter to [Kleon] and Heliodoros, the administrators, in order that [they shall obey]. (Year) 117 (?), (month) Hyperberetaios, [(day...) (S49a; author's translation).

Only one single piece of evidence, a letter of Antiochos VIII (109 BC) found in Cyprus (S69a), is, strictly speaking, an official letter addressed to a "foreign state," in the person of Ptolemy X Alexander.⁶⁴ The letter, communicating the new status of ἐλευθέρους (free) of the Σελευκεῖς τοὺς ἐν Πιερίᾳ (Seleukians of Pieria), follows a procedure known for the recognition of the status of inviolability, when the king granting the privilege in question undertakes to write to all the political authorities to spread the news.⁶⁵ Welles even considered as letters addressed to foreign states the seven letters written by Eumenes II and Attalos between 163 and 156 to the priest in Pessinous, Attis.⁶⁶ Apart from the *vexata quaestio* relating to the status of the sanctuary, which was regarded as a true state by some scholars and whose position vis-à-vis the Attalids has been recently challenged,⁶⁷ the particular character of the letters must be taken into consideration. They were drafted as secret correspondence between the two Attalids and the priest of Cybele and were published on stone only in the second half of the 1st century BC.⁶⁸ In a sense—official correspondence, but confidential—they form a category quite their own.

It has been noted that the Attalid kings seem to prefer to address directly the recipient involved in the transaction instead of doing so via officials.⁶⁹ Out of 44 Attalid letters, only 11 were sent to officials (eight by kings; three by officials), compared with 43 Seleukid letters out of 103 (considering as separate entries documents preserved in more than one copy). If we analyze the findings more closely, however, it emerges that out of these 43, 28 have the king as sender (the remaining 15 being sent by officials); and out of these 28, only 20 are pure letters (the remaining eight being letter-προστάγματα, a typology not attested for the Attalids). So the diplomatic conventions of the two dynasties were not that far apart (eight out of 44 compared with 20 out of 103). The difference is due to the Seleukid practice of sharing the power of writing and of enacting orders among officials (and the use of the letter-πρόσταγμα with its typical "cascade" transmission and powerful demonstration of hierarchical authority).⁷⁰

About half of Seleukid and Attalid letters (including some doubtful cases and the letters written by the Seleukid queen Laodike and the dynast Olympichos) are addressed to cities or communities. This high percentage must be related to the much higher survival rate of letters inscribed on stone and the practice of publication discussed above. It is nevertheless useful to note that most of these documents coincided with the beginning of new political relations: when a king ascended the throne, when rulers of different dynasties succeeded to the control of the same city, or when a king opened a political dialogue with individual cities during his reign, mainly after conquest.⁷¹ From the king's point of view, such communications, whose nature might vary greatly depending on the history of previous contacts, were usually a way of asserting his royal power. The majority of letters addressed to cities or communities are in fact only responses—generating further replies—to cities' embassies delivering decrees or to envoys with oral messages (all asking for grants from the king and/or bestowing honors on him, especially when a change of rule occurs). In rare cases the king speaks first, wishing a gift to be conveyed to a particular sanctuary,⁷² or wanting to recommend one or some of his friends (Fig. 6.7),⁷³ or having a festival recognized,⁷⁴ or conveying instructions or promises after conquest (Fig. 6.8).⁷⁵

Even if the king writes using the language of *euergetism*, it has been argued in the strongest of terms that the royal language employed toward cities represents a significant evolution from the impersonal order sometimes used by Alexander the Great when dealing with Greek cities and that “power does impinge on the language of *euergetism*” in a transaction “strengthening royal power” and through which “the cities could obtain what they wanted.”⁷⁶ In other words, the gap between the two types (those addressed to state officials and those addressed to cities and communities) of royal correspondence is less large than it may seem, and it would be preferable to subsume both into the more general category of “state communication.”

The only two real exceptions to the usual language of *euergetism* provide good proof for the veracity of this statement. In the oldest Seleukid letter presently known to us, Seleukos I instructs the Milesians with abrupt imperatives to convey his abundant gifts to the sanctuary of Apollo Didymeus (S1). Whatever the much debated power relationship between Miletos and the king, the letter shows little concern for the rhetoric and courtesy used by the (later) Seleukid chancery when writing to cities. The second document is a letter of Attalos, the brother of king Eumenes II, to the city of Amlada in northwestern Pisidia. It is part of a brief dossier of (at least) two documents and is preceded on the stone by a very fragmentary letter which may also be ascribed to Attalos himself (c. 160 BC).⁷⁷ While the first of these letters is composed in conformity with the language of *euergetism*, in the second Attalos does not restrain himself from recalling the previous errors committed by the city (with a verb which is an exceptional pre-Christian occurrence of a word implying the breaking of a pact,



FIGURE 6.7. White marble stele with a letter of Eumenes I, dynast of Pergamon, to the city of Pergamon, followed by the decree issued by the city (263–241 BC); found at Pergamon reused as a spolia in a tower of the Ottoman fortress: A3. Pergamonmuseum, inv. no. IvP18. © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Antikensammlung. Photograph by Gerhard Kunze. Courtesy Sylvia Brehme.

a “sin”: ἐπὶ τοῖς | προημαρτημένοις, ll. 9–10) and (explicitly) the bestowing of his orders upon the city (τὰ ἐπιστελλόμενα):

[- -] for the future your goodwill, you will not be deprived of any of our benefactions; regarding these and the goodwill we have toward you, you will know more from your ambassadors. Written in Mistia, when the king was in Oasada. Farewell. (A21a; author’s translation).



FIGURE 6.8. Marble stele inscribed with a letter of Queen Laodike to the city of Iasos, followed by the decree issued by the city in honour of Antiochos III and Laodike (c. 196 BC); discovered in Iasos reused as a spolia in a late antique building in the precinct of the Artemis temple: S51. Iasos, Antiquarium, inv. no. 1322. © Scuola Archeologica Italiana di Atene, photo no. 12124. Courtesy Emenuale Greco.

Attalos to the city and the elders of Amlada, greetings. Your envoys Oprasates, the son of Kilar[ios], Bo[- -], Nalagloas son of Kilarios, Menneas came before us and spoke about what you had ordered them. They asked that your hostages be freed, that we reduce the 9,000 drachmae which you owed for the restoration during the Gallic War and your annual payment of two talents, since you are weak and oppressed by many payments. As I saw that you repented of the offenses you committed and that you carry out our orders with zeal, I took care of you and showing my favor to Oprasates and to the city I have ordered to deduct 3,000 drachmae and to relieve you of paying the other 9,000 drachmae which you owed to us from the tribute and from the payment. I have also freed your hostages. Written in [- - -]. Farewell. (A21b; author's translation after the text as established by Welles, RC 54).

While the first letter is couched in the language of *euergetism* and, taken alone, might suggest a polite exchange between two autonomous political bodies, the second makes it clear that the city requesting the king's benefactions has entered the king's sphere of power. Although the sequence of the diplomatic exchanges implied by the two documents remains unclear to this day, their sequential inscription suggests a close relationship between the first letter, whose final preserved "contract clause"⁷⁸ speaks of both a previous and a current interaction between the city and the king, and the second, relating to a slightly later time, where the city dares to ask for favors in spite of its previous political stance and behavior. Basing its requests on the actual realignment to the Attalid side—forced into this position by the king's military victory over Amlada during the Gallic War, referred to in the second letter—the city is negotiating its status as a subject city, implied by the payment of a tribute to the king.⁷⁹ The reality of conquest is evident in both letters. When some years later⁸⁰ Attalos, now king, writes again to Amlada, the letter (A22) implies precisely the same power relationship, through its use of the same significant language of *euergetism*, of the typical final "contract clause" and through the additional honors paid by the city to the king/benefactor.

3 COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

The attention paid by scholars at the beginning of the 20th century to Hellenistic royal language and epistolary style⁸¹ has recently been revived by fundamental research into communication strategies and patterns of how information traveled in ancient state systems.⁸² Purely formal analysis of the language of inscribed royal letters and papyri, considered out of date in the second half of the 20th century, is now once again bearing fruit by focusing on political communication and the language of power. An important role in this revival has been played by the work of John Ma. Starting from the premise that "the political language of the actors was not an epiphenomenon to the realities of power, but was very real, since it constituted the relations between ruler and ruled, through processes of exchange,"⁸³ Ma studied the epigraphic evidence of the time of Antiochos III (r. 223–187) as the medium through which to comprehend Hellenistic kingship and the exercise of power. The language of *euergetism* written on stone, stylized as it is in letters and civic decrees, expresses parity between kings and cities and "hence the conversion of the straightforward 'power-as-conquest' into the far less straightforward 'power-as-battlefield' of interaction and negotiation."⁸⁴

The choice made by Seleukid and Attalid kings to use mainly letters instead of other written documents may be explained by the personal character of Hellenistic kingship,⁸⁵ letters being the most personal among the diplomatic instruments of royal power, capable of establishing a straightforward and intimate relationship with the recipient. As a treatise of the 4th–6th century AD

would put it: "A letter is a kind of written conversation with someone from whom one is separated and it fulfils a definite need. One will speak in it as though one were in the company of the absent person."⁸⁶ The exchange between ruler and ruled, which the epistolary form makes possible because of the way in which the expectation of a reply is built into the king's words, is at the same time raised to a level of mutual respect by that same epistolary form. A city, for instance Sardeis in 213, may decree the monumentalization of a royal letter (from queen Laodike), even when the letter itself is only a thank-you note for the honors voted for the royal family and a promise of some vague future favor:

Herakleides, son of Sokrates, proposed: since [it is fitting] to put up, on the parastas of the temple in the Metroon, the letter written by the queen to the council and the people concerning the honors voted by the people for the king and the queen and their children—let it seem good to the people to have the treasurer do the putting up, and to have him cover the subsequent expenditure from the monies he handles. (S25; translation after Ma 2002: no. 2A).

The official, in this case the high-ranking Zeuxis under Antiochos III, may attach the document received from the king to a message addressed to his subordinate, which is a perfect blend of polite epistolary formulae, respectful enactment of orders, and direct instructions:

Zeuxis to Philotas, greetings. If you are well, that would be good; we too are in good health. The copy of the ordinance written to us by the king concerning Nikanor, the chamberlain, is copied out below for your attention. You would do well to give orders for your subordinates to follow the instructions and carry them out as he sees fit. Year 103, 3 Artemisios. (S32; translation after Ma 2012: 145).

The extensive use of letters is, on the other hand, governed by the necessities imposed by having to conduct official communication over long distances.⁸⁷ The Seleukid state, in particular, had an impressively efficient system for transmitting royal information. The analysis of and comparison between the closing dates of documents arranged in dossiers and found in more than one copy testify to the rapidity of the diplomatic exchanges between the western and eastern parts of the kingdom. Occasionally it also shows up the incidental delay in the internal delivery of royal correspondence caused by the writing duties of the officials involved at a satrapal level.⁸⁸ A letter-*πρόσταγμα* written by Antiochos III at the end of February 209 BC, while in Media (?) during the expedition to the Upper Regions and probably before the campaign against Arsakes II, king of the Parthians, and sent to Mysia and Phrygia, arrived and was forwarded before the end of April; another one written by the same king at the end of February 193 while in Asia Minor, and sent to Phrygia and to Media, arrived and was forwarded at the

beginning of May and at the end of June respectively.⁸⁹ That copies of this document—pertaining to the foundation of queen Laodike's cult—were found at Dodurga, between Phrygia and Caria, and in distant Media, at Laodikeia (modern Nehavend) and in the present region of Kermanshah, has been seen as not “a mere accident of survival,” but as consistent with a specific royal plan, on the eve of the king's war against Rome, to target areas that were scarcely hellenized and/or at the borders of the kingdom.⁹⁰ The letter-*πρόσταγμα* itself, however, explicitly states that the royal cult of the queen, just like the one for the king himself, must spread through the whole kingdom (*κατὰ τὴν βασιλείαν*).

Letters also provided a ready-made instrument for fast official communication along short distances, as is attested for the orders passed between March 23 and March 25, 274 BC from Seleukeia on the Tigris to Babylon.⁹¹

The accidental discovery of written documents in peripheral or apparently less important areas of the Seleukid kingdom perhaps speaks in favor of the royal *horror vacui* and the attempt to fill it by official correspondence.⁹² The dossier from Failaka is somewhat puzzling from this point of view: a small island in the Persian Gulf catches the attention of the king, probably Antiochos III in 203/202 BC, who orders his official *Ikadion* to take care of its sanctuary of Artemis Soteira, which “functioned as the center of the life”⁹³ of the inhabitants. *Ikadion*, writing to his subordinate Anaxarchos, recalls how this order, already enacted by the king's ancestors, remained for a long time unheeded (**S44**). Not only the present king but also his predecessors had been paying attention to this little affair, with provisions concerning religion, taxation, and property rights aimed at entrenching the presence of a permanent population in *Ikaros*.⁹⁴

Information about how royal correspondence was conveyed is scarce. It is usually supposed that the Achaemenid system (see Kuhrt, this volume) was still in use during the Hellenistic period through a royal postal service with messengers on horseback. In addition to this high-level delivery system there most certainly existed a “satrapal” postal service in charge of copying and forwarding documents at a regional level.⁹⁵ A recently published royal letter may attest to the existence in Drangiana under Seleukos II of villages committed to the subsistence of the horses of the royal studs and/or of horsemen and horses passing through the royal routes.⁹⁶ Sometimes, however, documents were delivered by individuals involved in the affairs concerned. This is the case with Aristodikides of Assos, who received a grant of land by Antiochos I and personally handed over the three letters written by the king on the matter to Meleagros, the *στρατηγός* (governor) of the Hellespontine satrapy (**S4**). The great importance of ambassadors and envoys as conveyors of letters (and/or related decrees) in the communication between kings and cities is attested by the frequency of references, in the documents themselves, to the oral messages they are to transmit about civic intentions or royal wishes.

Some cities had a system of sending embassies to the king on a regular basis.⁹⁷ The successful adventure of Boulagoras of Samos, who as an ambassador took care of his city's interests against the power exercised by Seleukid φίλοι (friends) over the περαία (continental possessions) of the island, most likely around 253 BC, is striking.⁹⁸ He first went to Ephesos, but, since Antiochos II had already left, he followed him to Sardeis, where he fought for the city's interests in the presence of some of the king's most prominent friends and, even though they were directly involved in the dispute as recipients of the commandeered lands, he received three favorable letters written by the king addressed to Samos and to two royal officials placed in the area (the διοικητής and the προύραρχος). The king decided to replace his own royal messengers and entrust Boulagoras personally with the delivery of the documents, by which the Samians were able to recover their continental possessions.

The last step in the sequence should be archiving: archives of officials at different levels, and archives of cities and of associations. Starting from the king's own royal archive, as the orders made their way through the hierarchy of subordinate officials, documents were copied and their numbers multiplied.⁹⁹ In the case of a city, where letters might arrive directly without any other forwarded message by royal officials, the copy deposited in the archive was often followed by (at least) one copy on stone,¹⁰⁰ as were the letter-προστάγματα whose inscribing the king ordered. It is a selection of this final stage of the delivery chain that we can see and read nowadays.

The existence of archived official documents is attested *in absentia* by the bullae and clay tags that have been found in a number of excavated ancient archives pertaining to the Seleukid kingdom.¹⁰¹ The seals' impressions preserved on these two kinds of sealing objects (from two to forty on the bullae; usually one on the clay tags), despite the loss of the perishable documents they once sealed, testify to the use of seals by the king's officials.¹⁰² While the bulla (also known as "seal of the napkin-ring type") is, as in Uruk, "a spheroid lump of clay or bitumen, varying between twenty and fifty millimetres in diameter, with a hole of oval section passing fully through which originally enclosed a rolled and tied parchment or leather document"¹⁰³ or a papyrus¹⁰⁴, the term "clay tag" refers to a particular type of bulla, attested without the central cavity. The clay tag (or "single clay seal," "clay medallion," "appended sealing," "*cretula*" or generally also "bulla") is a piece of clay, pierced lengthwise with a string hole, which was put in the middle of a rolled papyrus tied up with papyrus fiber, holding its ends, as in Egypt,¹⁰⁵ or it served to close a rolled parchment or, much less frequently, a rolled papyrus, as in Seleukeia on the Tigris.¹⁰⁶

The official use of these seals is proved both by the architectural context in which they are often found¹⁰⁷ and by the impressions themselves. The latter display:

- Motifs connected with Seleukid coins (portraits of kings represented as gods; heroized portrait statues of the king; figures of gods; royal symbols), usually inscribed in Greek with the title of a Seleukid official, the name of the city in which he worked and, as the case may be, the date and a name of a tax (bullae from Uruk dating to the time of Antiochos III to Demetrios II, around 223–140 BC); or uninscribed portrait heads of deified or non-deified kings and queens and the favorite symbols of the Seleukids, the anchor and the horned horse head (bullae and clay tags from Uruk);¹⁰⁸
- A king's portrait or symbols (anchor, tripod, column) inscribed in Greek with the title of a Seleukid official (bullae and clay tags from Seleukeia on the Tigris dating to the time of Seleukos II to Antiochos III, at least 242/1–213/2 BC); or uninscribed royal symbols such as anchor, horse, lion, and cornucopia (clay tags from Seleukeia on the Tigris).¹⁰⁹

Because the documents themselves have perished, we can only speculate which kinds of texts (and in what language) were secured by these seals. In Uruk most are certainly connected with private contracts or private documents concerning the payment of various kinds of taxes, both of which may have been officially registered by the *χρεοφύλαξ*, a royal official.¹¹⁰ In Seleukeia a similarly attested procedure points to private documents which may be sealed by one of the two royal officers attested, the *χρεοφύλαξ* or the *βιβλιοφύλαξ*: most of them concern the payment of the salt tax (*ἀλική*), and some, always on papyrus (as the traces on the back testify), though connected with the Seleukid treasure (as the anchor on the seal attests), remain of unknown content.¹¹¹

The seals with a king's portrait in Seleukeia, however, may be of interest for our topic. Leaving aside the seals of the *χρεοφύλακες*, showing a king, and a considerable number of large seal impressions bearing Seleukid royal portraits (probably to be connected to local royal officials), there are a few instances, sometimes only one, of royal portrait seals on clay tags (the perfect sealing for documents meant to be despatched),¹¹² which feature an iconography unattested on coins and may have sealed letters or texts of royal provenance. These have been compared with findings in similar archival contexts from Nea Paphos (Cyprus) or Kallion/Kallipolis (Aetolia).¹¹³ The view is nevertheless disputed on a more general basis: Hellenistic kings, who did possess seals as is attested by the literary tradition,¹¹⁴ would have had symbols, not their own portraits, on them.¹¹⁵ Seleukos I's signet ring bore an anchor (Appian, *Syriaca* 285) and recent attempts have been made to reconstruct the appearance of the lion on Alexander's and Lysimachos's personal seals.¹¹⁶ A clay seal impression which used to close a circular letter of Ptolemy X Alexander bears the image of an eagle.¹¹⁷ We may add the incomplete seal impression attested on a clay cuneiform tablet from Uruk concerning a slave sale contract: a lion walking profile right with a horizontal anchor

above his back, which has been compared with an identical seal impression from Seleukeia and interpreted as the (or a) royal seal of King Antiochos I.¹¹⁸

Apart from this limited evidence, the assumption that the kings themselves did make extensive use of personal seals for the specific purpose of closing and ensuring their letters is mainly based on the common Greek epistolary practice—attested by sealed private, business, and official letters on papyrus from Egypt¹¹⁹ and by the literary tradition.¹²⁰ In addition to the royal Ptolemaic letter on papyrus mentioned above,¹²¹ Hellenistic epigraphic evidence provides a few clues. In a decree from Nisyros, which follows upon a letter of Philip V, king of Macedonia (r. 221–179), it is reported that the citizen Kallias arrived with the king's letter and seal—mentioned as two distinct objects (γράμματα φέρων καὶ σφραγίδα τὰν | βασιλέως)—through which he granted Nisyros the use of the local laws.¹²² In an allusive and obscure message sent to the priest Attis at Pessinous, Attalos writes that he has opened a letter (addressed to Attis himself?) which some envoys from Galatia (?) had given to him, and that he has sealed it again before sending it to the addressee together with the new message (A19f, lines 2–3: τὰ δὲ γράμματα λύσας | [καὶ ση]μην[ά]μ[ε]νος πάλιν ἀπέσταλκά σοι). The explicit reason for this procedure is that the envoys had declared that only with this new seal would Attis have been able to open the letter.¹²³ In any case, it may be added that, with letter-προστάγματα dispatched through the administrative chain of subordinate Seleukid officials, only the first addressee would receive a document sealed by the king, while the others would get only a copy of it (τὸ ἀντίγραφον) written and appended to the letter of their superior (and possibly sealed by him).

Opening a letter means separating the document from its closing seal or breaking the clay tag; this may explain in part the almost total loss of positive evidence for the kings' seals. Only documents sealed by (or in the presence of) an archive's official to be recovered and protected for future reference—and never read thereafter—may preserve their clay tags totally untouched, as they actually did in the archives of Hellenistic Babylonia (for fiscal documents these were *χρεοφυλάκεια*: a *χρεοφύλαξ* operated for instance in the temple archives at Uruk,¹²⁴ while two private archives existed in Seleukeia along with the public archive, possibly a *χρεοφυλάκειον*,¹²⁵ as in Dura-Europos).¹²⁶ Seals of royal letters, on the contrary, could undergo a twofold destination: they could be kept, either intact or broken, together with the letter they used to enclose by the addressee in a city's or official's archive (and may have left traces in our findings)¹²⁷; or, if indeed documents were copied and closed by the *ἀρχιγραμματεὺς* (secretary in chief) or by the *ἐπιστολογράφος/ἐπιστολαγράφος* (writer of letters) of the king to be kept as “original/primary copy” in addition to the one dispatched, they could have been stored in the royal archives of the king or the palace, which are now completely lost.¹²⁸ The existence, at least in Sardeis, of *βασιλικαὶ γραφαὶ* (royal archives) kept by a *βιβλιοφύλαξ* and connected with the

administration of royal land is only incidentally attested by the dossier of documents concerning the sale of a village and lands to queen Laodike by Antiochos II (A7, lines 13–16).

The widespread existence of civic archives in the Hellenistic cities, and the related complex patterns of registration and (re)production of documents as it is reflected in the epigraphic evidence, testifies to the regular care devoted to the kings' correspondence by the cities.¹²⁹ By entering the appointed archive—which served as a place where official acts were stored and preserved—royal written messages became *χρηματισμοί*, registered documents, always on hand for any future need of reference.¹³⁰

IN CONCLUSION

The publication on stone of royal correspondence provides the reader with a whole range of topics, selected not randomly but according to the criteria of the ancient recipient or sender. Let it be stressed once more that without the major commitment of the cities involved—autonomously or through royal or local officials—in the process of inscribing and displaying royal documents, we would not now be able to analyze in any depth the king's power of decision. And if we had only the words that the kings themselves ordered to be published, we would be confined to a limited interpretation of their communication strategies and hence of the powerful impact on civic life caused by their correspondence. It is true that the selective inscription of royal correspondence implies a process of civic mediation of the king's words, just as the conveying and forwarding by officials constituted a kind of interference. The persuasiveness of the words on stone, however, made permanent by will of the king or, more frequently, through the decision of the city, not only shows the extent of the king's rule and the hierarchy of his officials but also reflects the "real" interaction between unequal but mutually dependent powers.¹³¹ The authority of the king's words is increased when a city decides to monumentalize them. The authority of the city's resolutions is enhanced when a king writes. Hence we read in a letter of Antiochos III to the city of Magnesia on the Maeander, recognizing the games in honor of Artemis Leukophryene as "crowned" and Panhellenic, which was inscribed on the south wall of the portico in the marketplace:

Since we have had from the beginning the kindest feeling for your people because of the good-will which you have shown on all occasions to us and to our state, and since we are anxious to make clear our policy, we give our approval of the honors voted for the goddess and we propose to aid in furthering them in whatever matters you call to our attention or we ourselves think of. We have written also to our officers so that the cities

may, following our example, give their approval likewise. Farewell. (S34, lines 16–28; translation after Welles, RC 31).

APPENDIX

Catalogue of the Sources for the Seleukid and Attalid State Correspondences

Seleukid state correspondence: 69 inscriptions commemorating 103 letters.¹³²

- S1: Miletos, sanctuary of Didyma. Letter of Seleukos I to Miletos (288/7 BC), preceded by a note of explanation added by the publishing official and followed by the inventory list of the donations. *OGIS* I: 214; RC 5; *Inscr. Didyma* 424; Günther 1971: 43–50; Bringmann & von Steuben 1995: no. 280; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 114.
- S2: Stratonikeia (Caria). Letter of Seleukos I to Stratonikeia (?) (before 281 BC). *I. Stratonikeia* 1001; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 104.
- S3: Nysa. Letter of Seleukos I and Antiochos to Sopatros (281/0 BC; inscribed in the 1st century BC). RC 9; cf. Ma 2002: 269–270; Capdetrey 2007: no. 73.
- S4: Ilion. Letter of Meleagros to Ilion and three letters of Antiochos I to Meleagros (c. 274 BC). RC 10–13; *I. Ilion* 33; Virgilio 2003²: no. 18; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 22.
- S5: Erythrai. Letter of Antiochos I or II to Erythrai (270–260? BC), followed by the five starting lines of a decree. *OGIS* I: 223; RC 15; *I. Erythrai* 31; Kotsidu 2000: no. 237 (E2); cf. Ma 2002: 267–8; Capdetrey 2007: no. 35.
- S6: Ephesos. Letter of Antiochos II (?) to Ephesos (260–250? BC). *GIBM* III.2, 485; *OGIS* I: 242; RC 17; *I. Kyme* 3; *I. Ephesos* V, 1485; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 45.
- S7: Miletos, sanctuary of Didyma. Letter of the στρατηγός or διοικητής Metrophanes to an unknown official; letter of Antiochos II to Metrophanes; boundary delimitation (περιορισμός) by the ὑπαρχος (254/3 BC). RC 18–20; *Inscr. Didyma* 492; Virgilio 2003²: no. 19; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 115.
- S8: Miletos, sanctuary of Didyma. Letter of Seleukos II to Miletos (246 BC). *OGIS* I: 227; RC 22; *Inscr. Didyma* 493; Günther 1971: 66–95; Bringmann & von Steuben 1996: no. 282; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 116.
- S9: Unknown site in Drangiana, possibly Prophthasia in Drangiana. Letter of Seleukos II to Herophantos (246–226 BC). Rougemont 2012: no. 80bis.
- S10: Kos. Letter of Seleukos II (?) to Kos (242 BC). RC 26; Rigsby 1996: no. 9; *IG* 12.4: 210.
- S11: Labraunda. Letter of Seleukos II to the στρατηγός Olympichos (242/1? BC). *I. Labraunda* III.1, 1; Virgilio 2003²: no. 20; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 82.
- S12: Labraunda. Letter of Olympichos to Mylasa and letter of Seleukos II to Olympichos (242/1? BC; late copy of document S11, inscribed in the first century BC). *I. Labraunda* III.1, 2 and 1B.
- S13: Labraunda (Fig. 6.5). Letter of Olympichos to Mylasa (242/1? BC). *I. Labraunda* III.1, 3; Virgilio 2003²: no. 21; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 83.
- S14: Labraunda. Letter of Olympichos to Mylasa (242/1? BC; late copy of document S13, inscribed in the late 2nd or 1st century BC). *I. Labraunda* III.1, 3B.

- S15: Labraunda. Letter of Olympichos to Mylasa, preceded by the last portion of a decree issued by Mylasa and followed by a list of the dedicated lands (after 242/1? BC; inscribed in the late 2nd century BC). *I. Labraunda* III.1, 8A–C; Bringmann & von Steuben 1995: no. 301; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 84.
- S16: Mylasa. Letter of an unknown sender to Mylasa (?) (230–225? BC). *RC* 29 (sender: Attalos I?); *I. Mylasa* 22; cf. *I. Labraunda* III.1: 92–93 (sender: Olympichos).
- S17: Labraunda. Letter of Olympichos to Mylasa (220 BC). *I. Labraunda* III.1, 4; Virgilio 2003: no. 22; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 86.
- S18: Mylasa. Letter of Olympichos to Mylasa (220 BC, late copy of S17 inscribed in the 1st century AD). *I. Mylasa* 23; cf. *I. Labraunda* III.1: 23.
- S19: Labraunda. Letter of Olympichos to Mylasa (220 BC). *I. Labraunda* III.1, 6; Kotsidu 2000: no. 286 (E); Virgilio 2003²: no. 24; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 88.
- S20: Labraunda. Letter of Olympichos to the Chrysaoreis (?) (240–220 BC). *I. Labraunda* III.2, 45; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 90.
- S21: Mylasa. Letter of an unknown sender to Mylasa (?) (Hellenistic period). *I. Mylasa* 24.
- S22: Mylasa. Letter of an unknown sender to Mylasa (?) (Hellenistic period). *I. Mylasa* 25.
- S23: Mylasa. Letter of an unknown sender to Mylasa (?) (Hellenistic period). *I. Mylasa* 26.
- S24: Sardeis. Letter of Antiochos III to Sardeis (March 213 BC). Gauthier 1989: no. 1; *SEG* 39.1283; Bringmann & von Steuben 1995: no. 260 I; Ma 2002: no. 1; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 64.
- S25: Sardeis. Letter of queen Laodike and letter of Antiochos III to Sardeis, preceded by a decree issued by Sardeis concerning the publication (June 213 BC). Gauthier 1989: no. 2; *SEG* 39.1284; Bringmann & von Steuben 1995: no. 260 II; Ma 2002: no. 2; Virgilio 2003²: no. 8; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 65.
- S26: Sardeis. Letter of Antiochos III to Sardeis (summer 213 BC). Gauthier 1989: no. 3; *SEG* 39.1285; Bringmann & von Steuben 1995: no. 260 III, IV; Ma 2002: no. 3; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 66.
- S27: Sardeis. Letter of an unknown sender to Sardeis (213–190 BC), followed by a decree issued by Sardeis (after 188 BC) in honor of Heliodoros son of Diodoros. Gauthier 1989: 112–116 no. 4; *SEG* 39.1286; Ma 2002: no. 41A.
- S28: Sardeis. Letter of Antiochos III to Sardeis (213–190 BC). Gauthier 1989: 125–126 no. 5; *SEG* 39.1287; Ma 2002: no. 41B; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 70.
- S29: Sardeis. Letter of Antiochos III to Sardeis (213–190 BC). Gauthier 1989: 127–129 no. 6; *SEG* 39.1288; Ma 2002: no. 41C; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 71.
- S30: Sardeis. Letter of Antiochos III (?) to an official (?) (213–190 BC). Gauthier 1989: 129–134 no. 7; *SEG* 39.1289; Ma 2002: no. 41D; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 67.
- S31: Tralleis (also known as Seleukeia). Letter of an unknown sender to Seleukeia (213–188 BC). *RC* 41; *I. Tralleis* 17; cf. Ma 2002: 269; Capdetrey 2007: no. 43.
- S32: Modern Pamukçu in Balıkesir province (Mysia). Letter of Philotas to Bithys; letter of Zeuxis to Philotas; letter of Antiochos III to his viceroy Zeuxis (February to April 209 BC). *SEG* 37.1010; Boffo 1994: no. 5; Ma 2002, 2004: no. 4; Virgilio 2003²: no. 9; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 29.
- S33: Philomelion (Phrygia), modern Akşehir. Letter of Demetrios (?) to an unknown recipient; letter of Aineas to Demetrios; letter of Philomelos to

- Aineas; letter of Zeuxis to Philomelos; letter of Antiochos III to his viceroy Zeuxis (209 BC). Malay 2004; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 139.
- S34: Magnesia on the Maeander. Letter of Antiochos III to Magnesia (205 BC). *Inscr. Magnesia* 18; *OGIS* I: 231; *RC* 31; Rigsby 1996: no. 69; *I. Estremo Oriente* 250; Rougemont 2012: no. 51; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 60.
- S35: Magnesia on the Maeander. Letter of Antiochos the son to Magnesia (205 BC). *Inscr. Magnesia* 19; *OGIS* I: 232; *RC* 32; Rigsby 1996: no. 70; *I. Estremo Oriente* 251; Rougemont 2012: no. 52; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 61.
- S36: Amyzon. Letter of a (Seleukid?) king to Amyzon (before 203? BC). Robert & Robert 1983: no. 7.
- S37: Amyzon. Letter of Antiochos III to Amyzon (203? BC). Robert & Robert 1983: no. 8.
- S38: Amyzon. Letter of Zeuxis (?) to Amyzon (May 203 BC). *RC* 38; Robert & Robert 1983: no. 9; Ma 2002: no. 5; cf. Ma, Derow & Meadows 1995; Dreyer 2002; Ma 2003; Capdetrey 2007: no. 93.
- S39: Amyzon. Letter of Antiochos III to the army (203 BC). *OGIS* I: 217; *RC* 39; Robert & Robert 1983: no. 10; Ma 2002: no. 6; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 94.
- S40: Amyzon. Letter of Zeuxis (?) to Amyzon (203 BC or later). *GIBM* IV.2, 1035; *RC* 40; Robert & Robert 1983: no. 11; Ma 2002: no. 8.
- S41: Amyzon. Letter of Antiochos III (?) to Amyzon (203? BC). Robert & Robert 1983: no. 13.
- S42: Labraunda. Letter of Zeuxis (?) to the army (203 BC). *I. Labraunda* III.2, 46; Robert & Robert 1983: 139–141; Ma 2002: no. 15; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 91.
- S43: Mylasa, sanctuary of Sinuri. Letter of Antiochos III to the *συγγένεια* and the priest of the sanctuary? (203–201 BC). Virgilio 2011: 79–177 (P. Hamon, *Bull. ép.* 2011: 530). Cf. Robert 1945: 12; Robert & Robert 1983: 187; Ma 2002: 269 (Antiochos II or Antiochos Hierax remain possible as the sender).
- S44: Ikaros (modern island of Failaka in the Persian Gulf). Letter of the Seleukid official Ikadion to Anaxarchos, attached to a letter of the official Anaxarchos to the inhabitants (*οἰκηταί*) of the island of Ikaros (203/2? BC). Roueché & Sherwin-White 1985: 13–39; Virgilio 2003²: 184–186 (on problematic chronology: 241/0, 238/7 or 203/2), no. 26; *I. Estremo Oriente* 421–422; Petropoulou 2006 (date = 238/7 BC; cf. *SEG* 56.1844); cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 158.
- S45: Soloi (Cilicia). Letter of Antiochos III (?) to an official (197? BC). *RC* 30 (king = Ptolemy IV); Lenger 1980²: no. 84 (king = Ptolemy IV); Virgilio 2011: 179–266 (king = Antiochos III); cf. Ma 2002: 271 (king = a Ptolemy).
- S46: Teos. Letter of Antiochos III to Teos (203–190 BC). Herrmann 1965: 41–42, 85–89; *SEG* 41.1003 IV; Ma 2002: no. 19A; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 48.
- S47: Teos. Two letters of Antiochos the son or Antiochos III to Teos (203–190 BC). Herrmann 1965: 157–158; *SEG* 41.1004; Ma 2002: no. 19B–C; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 49.
- S48: Teos. Letter of queen Laodike to Teos and letter of queen Laodike or Antiochos III to the guild (*κοινόν*) of the Dionysiac artists (203–190 BC). Herrmann 1965: 158–159; *SEG* 41.1005; Ma 2002: no. 19D–E; Bielman 2002: no. 13; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 50.
- S49: Scythopolis (also known as Bet Shean, modern Hefzibah in Israel). Dossier with six letters of Antiochos III to his officials and two petitions (*ὑπομνήματα*) of Ptolemy son of Thraseas to Antiochos III (202/1 and 199–195 BC). *SEG*

- 29.1613; Bertrand 1982 (*SEG* 29.1808); *SEG* 41.1574; Virgilio 2003²: no. 27; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 151.
- S50: Kildara. Letter of Zeuxis to Kildara (197 BC). Robert & Robert 1983: 181–187 (*SEG* 33.867); *I. Mylasa* 962; Ma 2002: no. 25; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 123.
- S51: Iasos (Fig. 6.8). Letter of queen Laodike to Iasos, followed by the decree issued by the city in honor of Antiochos III and Laodike (c. 196 BC). *I. Iasos* 4, ll. 1–32, 33–107; Bringmann & von Steuben 1995: no. 297; Nafissi 2001; Ma 2002: no. 26A–B; Bielman 2002: no. 30; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 79.
- S52: Ilion. Letter of Antiochos III (?) to Ilion (winter 197/6 or spring 196? BC). *RC* 42; *I. Ilion* 37; Ma 2002: no. 34; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 27.
- S53: Sardeis. Letter of a royal official to his subordinates (?) (209–193 BC, perhaps 197 BC). *Sardis* 2; Gauthier 1989: 171–178; *SEG* 37.1003; Ma 2002, 2004: no. 36; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 69.
- S54: Heraklea on the Latmos. Letter of Antiochos III to Heraklea; letter of Zeuxis to Heraklea (196–193 BC). Wörrle 1988; *SEG* 37. 859; Bringmann & von Steuben 1995: no. 296; Ma 2002: no. 31; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 106.
- S55: Dodurga, modern Dodurga in the Acipayam plain. Letter of Anaximbrotes to Dionytas, letter of Antiochos III to the στρατηγός Anaximbrotes (February/March to May 193 BC). *OGIS* I: 224; *RC* 36, 37; Ma 2002: no. 37; Bielman 2002: no. 6; *I. Estremo Oriente* 452, 453; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 137.
- S56: Modern Kermanshah in Iran (Media). Letter of Menedemos to Thoas, letter of Antiochos III to the στρατηγός Menedemos (February to June 193 BC). Robert 1967; *I. Estremo Oriente* 271, 272; Rougemont 2012: no. 68; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 168.
- S57: Laodikeia (Media), modern Nehavend in Iran. Letter of Menedemos to Apollodotos and to Laodikeia; letter of Antiochos III to the στρατηγός Menedemos (February to June 193 BC). Robert 1949; *I. Estremo Oriente* 277, 278; Virgilio 2003²: no. 10; Rougemont 2012: no. 66; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 166.
- S58: Daphnai (Syria). Letter of Antiochos III to an official (October 189 BC). *OGIS* I: 244; *RC* 44; *IGLSyr* 3.2, 992; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 146.
- S59: Nysa. Letter of Antiochos III to an official (?); letter of Antiochos III to Nysa (220–188 BC). *RC* 43 (civic decree; royal letter); Ma 2002: no. 43 (civic decree; royal letter); Ma 2004: no. 43A–B; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 74.
- S60: Nysa. Letter of a Hellenistic king to Nysa, preceded by a fragmentary (royal?) document (2nd century BC; inscribed in the 1st century BC). *RC* 64 (fragment may be letter of Seleukos IV or Antiochos IV); cf. Robert & Robert 1983: 144 (king = Antiochos III); Piejko 1989: 402 (king: Eumenes II; fragment is royal letter); Rigsby 1988: 149–153; 1996: no. 185 (king = Mithradates); Gauthier, *Bull. ép.* 1989, 279 (king = not Mithradates); Ma 2002: 270, 272–3 (king = not Antiochos III; fragment is not an Attalid document).
- S61: Kos. Letter of Antiochos III to Kos (223–187 BC). *SEG* 33.673; Samama 2003: no. 133; *IG* 12.4: 250; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 18.
- S62: Smyrna (?). Letter of a queen? (2nd century BC). *I. Smyrna* 2.1: 615.
- S63: Telmessos (Lycia). Letter of a Hellenistic king (Antiochos III or Eumenes II) or royal official to Telmessos (beginning of 2nd century BC). Wörrle 1979 (*SEG* 29.1516); cf. Robert & Robert, *Bull. ép.* 1980: 484 (official of Eumenes II); Ma 2002: 94 (Antiochos III?); Ma 2013: 80 (Eumenes II or royal official); cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 130.

- S64: Limyra (Lycia). Letter of a royal official (Mithridates son of Antiochos III?) to Limyra (*ante* 188 BC). Wörrle 2011: 377–415 (D. Rousset, *Bull. ép.* 2012: 397); Virgilio, forthcoming.
- S65: Seleukeia Pieria (Syria). Letter of Seleukos IV to the ἐπιστάτης Theophilos, a royal official, and to Seleukeia Pieria preceded by a decree of Seleukeia (May 186 BC). *SEG* 7.62; *RC* 45; Holleaux 1942; *IGLSyr.* 3.2, 1183; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 147.
- S66: Marisa, modern Maresha in Israel (Fig. 6.6). Letter of Dorymenes, governor (?) of the satrapy of Coele-Syria and Phoenicia, to his subordinate Diophanes; letter of Heliodoros, chief minister of Seleukos IV, to Dorymenes; letter of Seleukos IV to Heliodoros (summer 178 BC). Fragments A, B: Cotton & Wörrle 2007; fragments C, D, E: Gera 2009; text corrections: Jones 2009; Bencivenni 2011: 153 (*SEG* 57.1838).
- S67: Iamnia on the Sea (modern Yavne Yam in Israel). Letter of Antiochos V to an official followed by a ὑπόμνημα (petition) of the city (June/July 163 BC). Isaac 1991; *Bull. ép.* 1992: 552; *SEG* 41.1556; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 152.
- S68: Baitokaike (Syria), modern Hosn Soleiman. Letter of a king Antiochos to Euphemos, followed by ὑπομνηματισμός (written report of a decision) of the king (after 162 BC; inscribed between 253 and 259 AD). *OGIS* I: 262; *RC* 70; *IGLSyr.* 7.4028; Rigsby 1996: no. 218B–C; Yon & Gatier 2009: no. 34; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 150.
- S69: Palaipaphos (Cyprus). Letter of Antiochos VIII to Ptolemy X Alexander; letter of Antiochos VIII to Seleukeia Pieria (September 109 BC). *OGIS* I: 257; *GIBM* IV.2, 970; *RC* 71–72; Mitford 1961: 3–4, no. 3.

Attalid state correspondence: 28 inscriptions commemorating 44 letters.¹³³

- A1: Kyme. Letter of Philetairos to Kyme, preceded and followed by decrees of Kyme (280–278 BC or c. 270 BC). Manganaro 2000; *SEG* 50.1195; cf. Gauthier 2003.
- A2: Pergamon. Letter of Eumenes I to the army (c. 260 BC). *Inscr. Pergamon* 7; *RC* 16.
- A3: Pergamon (Fig. 6.7). Letter of Eumenes I to Pergamon, followed by the decree issued by the city (263–241 BC). *Inscr. Pergamon* 18; *OGIS* I: 267; *RC* 23; Kotsidu 2000: no. 217 (E); Müller 2003: 423–433.
- A4: Pergamon. Letter of Attalos I (?) to a royal official (second half of 3rd century BC). *Inscr. Pergamon* 40; *RC* 24.
- A5: Magnesia on the Maeander. Letter of Attalos I to Magnesia (208/7 BC). *Inscr. Magnesia* 22; *OGIS* I: 282; *RC* 34; Bringmann & von Steuben 1995: no. 272; Rigsby 1996: no. 68.
- A6: Pergamon. Letter of Eumenes II to the city of Temnos (197/6–158/7 BC). *Inscr. Pergamon* 157; *RC* 48.
- A7: Pergamon. Letter of an Attalid king, probably Eumenes II, to *katoikoi* (?) (197/6–158/7 BC). *Inscr. Pergamon* 158; *RC* 51; Segre 1935; Virgilio 2003²: no. 29.
- A8: Kaunos. Letter of Eumenes II to Kaunos (197/6–158/7 BC). Marek 2006: 131–132, no. 2.
- A9: Tyriaion (Phrygia Paroreios). Found at the modern village of Mahmuthisar. Three letters of Eumenes II to Tyriaion/Toriaion (after 188 BC). Jonnes & Riel 1997; *SEG* 47.1745; *I. Sultan Dağı* 393; Virgilio 2003²: no. 30; cf. Bencivenni 2003: no. 11.

- A10: Pleura? Found north of Lake Koloe, modern Marmar Gölü. Ὑπόμνημα (petition) of the priest Kadoos to the high priest Euthydemos; letter of Diophantos to Attinas; letter of Euthydemos to Asklepiades (after 188 BC). *SEG* 46.1519; Müller 2000: 520–523; Ma 2002: no. 49; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 76.
- A11: Soma in the Kaikos valley. Letter of Attalos, brother of Eumenes II, to an official (February 185 BC); letter of the same official (?) to an unknown recipient. *RC* 47; Piejko 1989; Chandezon 2003: no. 50.
- A12: Iasos. Letter of Eumenes II to Iasos, followed by a decree issued by the city (182 BC). *RC* 49; *I. Iasos* 6 (ll. 1–11, 12–20); Allen 1983: 215–216 no. 11; Rigsby 1996: no. 177.
- A13: Kos. Letter of Eumenes II to Kos, followed by a decree issued by the city (182 BC). *RC* 50; Segre 1948; Allen 1983: 216–217 no. 12; Rigsby 1996: no. 176; *IG* 12.4: 251.
- A14: Telmessos (Lycia). Letter of Eumenes II to Artemidoros (November 181 BC), followed by the beginning of a document dated to August/September 193 BC in the reign of Antiochos III. Segre 1938; Virgilio 2003²: no. 32; cf. Capdetrey 2007: no. 131.
- A15: Miletos. Letter of Eumenes II to the league (κοινόν) of the Ionians (167/6 BC). *OGIS* II: 763; *I. Milet* I.9, 306; *RC* 52; Allen 1983: 218–219 no. 13; Bringmann & von Steuben 1995: no. 285.
- A16: Pergamon. Letter of Eumenes II to the guild (κοινόν) of the Dionysiac artists (c. 170–160 BC). *Inscr. Pergamon* 163; *RC* 53; Le Guen 2001: 243–250 no. 47; Aneziri 2003: 387–391 no. D12.
- A17: Tabai (Caria). Found in the modern village of Kale in Denizli province. Letter of Eumenes II to Tabai (167–158/7 BC). Guizzi 2006 (P. Hamon, *Bull. ép.* 2009: 440); Guizzi *apud* Ritti 2008: no. 7; *SEG* 57.1109; cf. Ma 2013: 60 n. 44 (Tabai or Sala?).
- A18: Modern village of Taşkuyucak in Manisa province, near Daldis (Lydia). Letter of Eumenes II to an official; letter of Eumenes II to an official with verbatim quotes of a community's petition (after 166/5 BC). Herrmann & Malay 2007 (C. Brixhe, Ph. Gauthier, *Bull. ép.* 2007: 451); *SEG* 57.1150; Thonemann 2011 (P. Hamon, *Bull. ép.* 2012: 369); cf. the discussion of the text's typology: Wörrle 2009: 427–428 n. 76; Virgilio 2011: 52–53; Riel 2011: 143–146; Virgilio 2013: 258–260; Bencivenni, forthcoming.
- A19: Pessinous (Galatia). Letter of Eumenes II to the priest Attis (163 BC); letter of Eumenes II to Attis (163–162 BC); letter of Eumenes II to Attis (c. 162–160 BC); letter of Attalos to Attis (c. 162–160 BC); letter of Attalos to Attis (c. 159–158 BC); letter of Attalos to Attis (158–156 BC). All texts were inscribed in the 1st century BC. *OGIS* I: 315; *RC* 55–61; Virgilio 2003²: no. 33; *I. Pessinous* 1–7.
- A20: Pessinous. Letter of Attalos, brother of Eumenes II, to Sosthenes and Heroides (170–159 BC). Not edited. Cf. *I. Pessinous*: 1 n. 1; Virgilio 2011: 51 n. 107.
- A21: Amlada (Pisidia). Two letters of Attalos, brother of Eumenes II, to Amlada (160 BC). *OGIS* II: 751; *RC* 54 (only b); Swoboda, Keil & Knoll 1935: no. 74; Allen 1983: 225 nos. 22–23.
- A22: Amlada (Pisidia). Letter of Attalos II to Amlada (after 158/7 BC). Swoboda, Keil & Knoll 1935: no. 75.

- A23: Ilion. Letter of Attalos II (?) to Ilion, preceded by another document (159–138 BC). *I. Ilion* 42; only the letter: *RC* 62; Bringmann & von Steuben 1995: no. 250; Chandezon 2003: no. 48.
- A24: Olbasa, modern Belenli. Letter of Attalos II to Olbasa, preceded by a decree issued by the city in honour of Sotas (158 or 138 BC). Kearsley 1994; *SEG* 44.1108; Virgilio 2003²: no. 34.
- A25: Olbasa, modern Belenli. Letter of an Attalid king to a community (?) (3rd or 2nd century BC). *SEG* 48.1532.
- A26: Ephesos. Letter of Attalos II to Ephesos (150–140 BC). *SEG* 26.1239; *I. Ephesos* II, 202; Allen 1983: 225–226 no. 24.
- A27: Pergamon (Fig. 6.3). Letter of Attalos II to his cousin and official Athenaios; letter of Attalos III to the city of Cyzicos; letter of Attalos III to Pergamon, preceded by a decree issued by Pergamon (December 142; October 135; October 135 BC). *Inscr. Pergamon* 248; *OGIS* I: 331; *RC* 65–67.
- A28: Hieria Kome (Caria)? Found at Köşk in Aydın province. Letter of Attalos III to an official with a fragmentary text of unknown character on the right side (after 138? BC). *RC* 69; *I. Tralleis* 18; cf. Ma 2002: 271.

State Correspondence in the Roman Empire

Imperial Communication from Augustus to Justinian

Simon Corcoran¹

IN his speech in praise of Rome, the orator Aelius Aristides (117–181) includes a memorable picture of how the empire was governed:

And if the governors should have even some slight doubt whether certain claims are valid in connection with either public or private lawsuits and petitions from the governed, they immediately send to him (sc. the emperor) with a request for instructions what to do, and they wait until he provides a response, like a chorus waits for its trainer. Therefore, he has no need to wear himself out by traveling around the whole empire, nor, by appearing in person, now among some, now among others, to make sure of each detail when he has the time to tread their soil. It is easy for him to stay where he is and manage the entire civilized world by letters, which arrive almost as soon as they are written, as if they were carried by winged envoys. (Aelius Aristides, *Or. XXVI: To Rome* 32–33)²

With some discounting for rhetorical exaggeration, Aristides is surely correct in highlighting long-distance correspondence as key to the functioning of the empire. Yet given the distances involved and the slow pace of travel, as well as the mismatch between the demands of the empire's large population and the limited time and staff available to the emperor, we need to be cautious in thinking that all things could be or even were expected to be managed by remote control. We must also remember that many still tried if possible to deal with the emperor face to face, and that written documents were often supplements to, rather than replacements for, these encounters. The succeeding pages will try to flesh out Aristides's optimistic picture to give a more balanced assessment of the imperial reality of "government by correspondence."

The origins of the emperor's approach to correspondence lie in the practices of the holders of imperium in the late Republic (including the disturbed triumviral period, 43–30 BC),³ whether on campaign or governing provinces, who had to communicate with the Senate at home, while also following, especially in the East, the longstanding practice of their Hellenistic royal predecessors of

corresponding by letter with the cities and communities in their sphere, although these could also approach the Senate directly.⁴ This pattern continued under Augustus (r. 27 BC–AD 14), except that he and subsequent emperors became the key hub in both cases: the center with whom both officials in the field and subject communities routinely communicated. What this also entailed was that, as for the Republican aristocratic officeholders from whom he had emerged, it was the emperor's own household that provided most of the staff needed for his administration, since there were very few state functionaries to act as a civil service. Although the emperor's position rested upon the manipulation of Republican precedent, by the 2nd century AD (cf. map, Fig. 7.1) his *de facto* unbounded constitutional power was recognized, and almost all oral or written pronouncements that he made in any context came to acquire the force of law. Aside from some texts preserved for literary reasons (section 1.2.1), this explains why imperial letters and other forms of “missive” so often survive as normative texts recycled in legal collections and divorced from their original context, even if still providing us with glimpses of their first function and purpose. Although this essay seeks to survey Roman “state correspondence,” it is in fact quite difficult to draw strict dividing lines between various categories of document, and much of what follows necessarily employs a wide variety of materials.

1 THE SOURCES

Original documents do not survive for the Roman Empire, at least at the high level of communications between center and periphery. We do possess some original correspondence between lower officials, especially among the papyri. Perhaps most famous are the Beatty Panopolis papyri, comprising two long rolls, both copybooks, one representing the outgoing correspondence of the *strategos* of the Panopolite nome (298), and the second the letters coming in to him from the procurator of the Lower Thebaid (300).⁵ Otherwise, only a single original imperial document with the emperor's subscription survives: a letter of Theodosius II (r. 402–450) to the local commander in Upper Egypt, written in response to the petition of a bishop (Fig. 7.2).⁶ We are, therefore, reliant upon versions at increasing removes from their original form, context, and period. Having said that, the total body of imperial pronouncements of all types that survives is quite large, being roughly estimated by one scholar recently as about 9,000,⁷ although this involves considerable double-counting, since many items are duplicates or versions of one another, or need to be joined together as parts of longer texts. Nonetheless, this is a sizeable, rich and diverse resource, even if it requires careful handling.

Before discussing the available evidence and its transmission, I will briefly describe the different written formats of imperial pronouncements. Despite their distinctions, these pronouncements nonetheless overlap, or at least come to

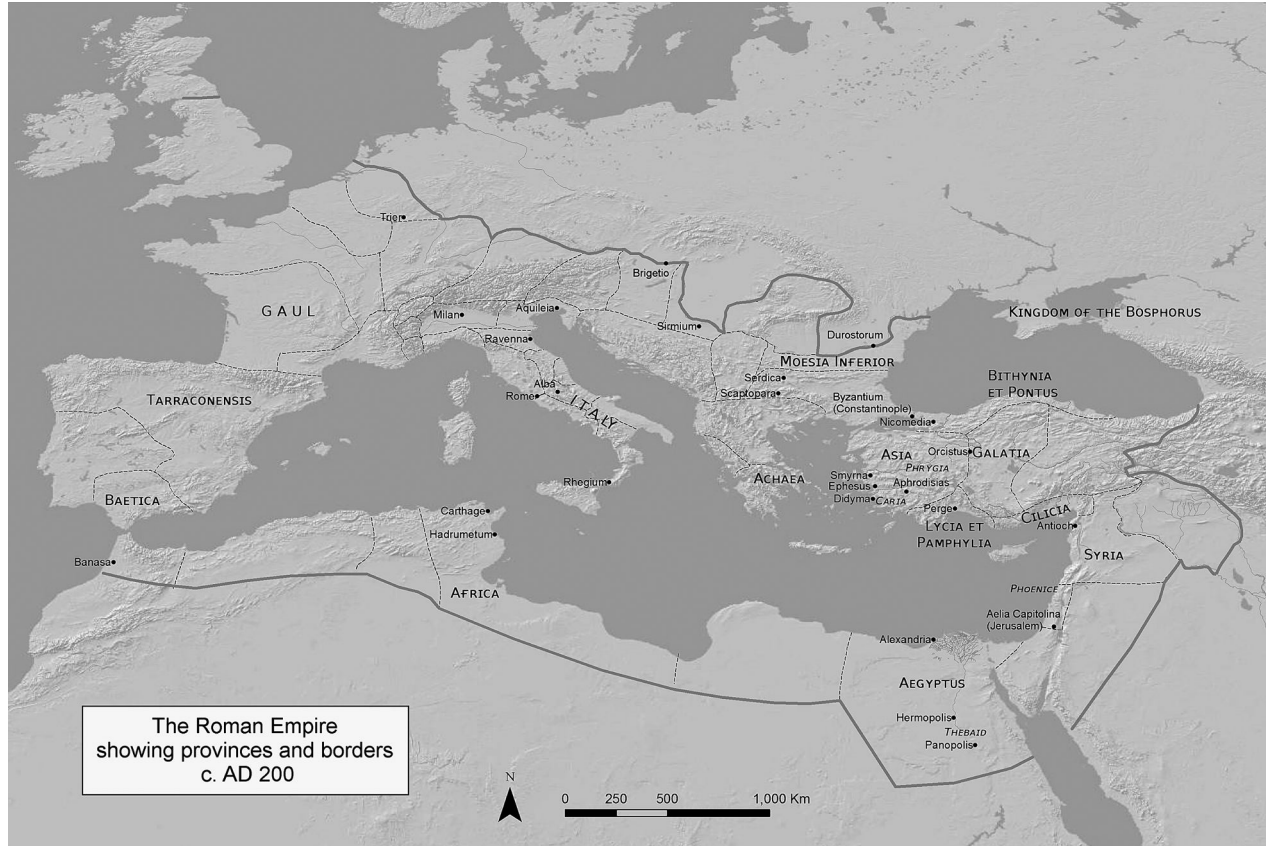


FIGURE 7.1. *The Roman Empire, c. 200 AD, with cities and provinces mentioned in this chapter. The names of provinces in existence at that time are indicated in SMALL CAPS. The names of additional later provinces are indicated in ITALICS. Map by Alessio Palmisano, after a sketch of the author.*

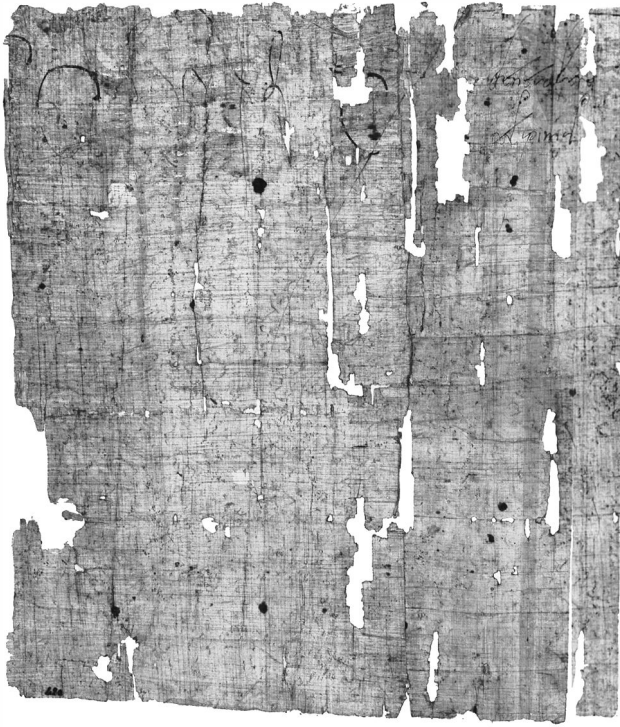


FIGURE 7.2. Fragmentary end of a Latin letter with the original subscription of the emperor Theodosius II preserved in the top right. Papyrus dating to the 5th century. P. Leiden Z (inv. AMS 5). Photo © Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden. Used with kind permission.

overlap, considerably in function, so that it is not always possible or even helpful to separate out “correspondence” in the narrow sense:

Edict (*edictum*; Greek: **πρόσταγμα, διάταγμα**): Edicts are general pronouncements, directed to the population at large, sometimes of a particular city or province, but also to the entire empire. Governors and other officeholders also issue edicts. There is not usually any specified addressee, since the text is a general declaration and is typically prefaced simply by *Imperator dicit* (“The emperor says”).⁸ They can be seen as the most typically proactive form of imperial communication.

Letter (*epistula, litterae*; Greek: **ἐπιστολή, γράμμαστα**):⁹ Letters are distinguished in format by bearing a formal greeting and farewell to a specified addressee. For our purposes, letters may be divided into several subtypes.

- a. Letters encompassing general legislation circulated around the empire, usually addressed to officeholders, perhaps accompanying

an edict, and, in the later empire at least, which is when this format becomes most common, they often reached lower officeholders only via senior officials such as the praetorian prefect.

- b. Letters addressed to an individual officeholder on an official matter, often issued in answer to *consultationes* or requests, when it might also be called a “rescript.” This is the format closest to this volume’s conception of “state correspondence.”
- c. Letters in the form of codicils (*codicilli*) of appointment to office.
- d. Letters issued in answer to petitions from high-ranking persons (but not in their capacity as holders of office) or more typically embassies from cities or other communal bodies. Although often akin to the private petitions discussed below, the key role played by the city, rather than the province, as the basic unit into which the empire was divided means that letters to cities must be regarded as part of official correspondence. Further, the fact that individuals of high rank corresponded with the emperor, when themselves both in and out of office (e.g. Pliny, *Letters*, Book 10), means that there is no sharp division between public and private, official and non-official. Both these types of correspondence are important features of the way the empire functioned and cohered.

Mandata (Greek: ἐντολαί):¹⁰ These are the standing instructions issued to a new governor. In origin this may have been because governors in the imperial provinces were deputies of the emperor (*legati Augusti*), but they are found issued even to proconsuls in the public provinces from very early,¹¹ and so became general and normal practice. Indeed, they seem to have become increasingly ossified texts. They are not well attested.

Private Rescript (*rescriptum*, *subscriptio*):¹² **Greek: ἀντιγραφή,¹³ ὑπογραφή):**¹⁴ Private rescripts are answers to petitions from private persons. They are individually addressed, but without greeting or farewell. Originally they would be written at the bottom of the petition, but became self-standing. They were not routinely sent to petitioners, but would be posted up in batches outside the emperor’s residence. In rare cases governors were involved in the forwarding of petitions and receipt of replies.¹⁵

Adnotatio (Greek: παρασημείωσις):¹⁶ Attested from the late 3rd century, these are special grants to an individual or community, usually designed to accompany and confirm a rescript giving an exceptional privilege or derogation from the law.

The emperor also made many oral pronouncements during various types of judicial proceedings, hearings of embassies, and in the Senate.¹⁷ These would

usually have been written down, indeed were often delivered from written copies, which was standard for judicial sentences, and one way or another they entered the written record.¹⁸

By the early 3rd century, imperial documents came routinely to be referred to as “sacred,” and *sacrae litterae* (used for more than letters narrowly defined) and similar terms became standard formulations.¹⁹

One important feature is that the taking of administrative or legislative action could generate numerous documents in different formats (edict, letter), addressed to many different people or groups and often of overlapping content. Especially in the later Empire, essentially the same text might exist in both edictal and epistolary formats. This only adds to the confusions of form and function in written communication in the Roman Empire.

The above are the major categories of pronouncement. Their exact functions change somewhat over time. However, there is inevitably distortion in the evidence, since the survival of each format varies greatly by period and transmission route. Therefore, the sources of the material must be explained next.

1.1 Epigraphic and Papyrological Evidence²⁰

In contrast to the other routes of survival, inscriptions provide contemporary or near-contemporary copies, even though most such copies were not created officially; that is, by the emperor or officeholders. Occasionally, however, we do possess copies generated by the formal promulgation process, and these are the closest to authentic originals. For instance, the two bronze copies of Licinius’s letter on military privilege (June 311) were displayed in legionary fortresses (Brigetio, Durostorum, both on the Danube; section 5.3 with Fig. 7.8) according to the emperor’s instructions.²¹ Inscribed texts, official or not, were usually reproduced complete and often retained formal elements, sometimes in full (e.g. extensive imperial titulature).²² The most typical inscribed text is a letter in Greek to an eastern city about its privileges, dating to the period of the Principate (i.e. the early Empire, from Augustus to the 3rd century), a text usually obtained and erected on the initiative of the city itself. A rarer phenomenon, largely confined to the early 4th century, is multiple copies of texts, usually in Latin, representing more concerted attempts by the emperor or at least by eager governors at the promulgation of general measures, such as the Prices Edict and the Caesariani decrees.²³ Another feature is the inscribing of dossiers: sometimes a historical collection of older texts, as on the archive wall at Aphrodisias (Fig. 7.3)²⁴; otherwise, more coherent contemporaneous assemblages, such as the Scaptopara and Orcistus inscriptions (Fig. 7.4),²⁵ each put up by the recipients in a manner designed to satisfy their own needs, as regards both the selection and arrangement of material. Finally, some dossiers are “nested,” containing documents transmitted by or between officeholders and the emperor, such as the Severan



FIGURE 7.3. Archive Wall at Aphrodisias, showing 3rd-century reinscription of imperial letters of privilege in Greek (IAph2007). Photo by Mossman Roueché, with kind permission.

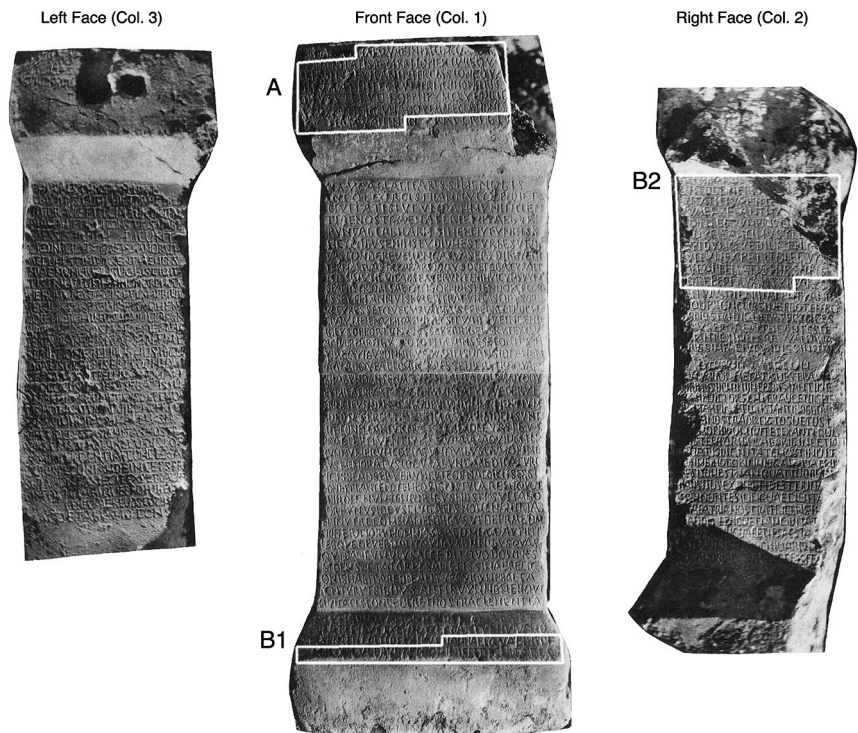


FIGURE 7.4. The Orcistus monument, c. 330 (today destroyed). Adapted by Ashley Van Haeften from Calder 1956: pl. 20.

Tyras letters,²⁶ rather in the manner of earlier Hellenistic epigraphic dossiers like the Heliodorus inscription.²⁷

As with inscriptions, documentary papyri provide contemporary or near-contemporary copies of texts, although there is a greater likelihood of these being both more informal (e.g. not preserving full diplomatic elements) and privately copied or recopied over a long period. However, as already noted, the sole authentic imperial original in fact survives on papyrus. Inscriptions and papyri together provide c. 600 texts, and there is a continual trickle of new texts being discovered and published (e.g. *P. Oxy.* LXXVII 5114; *AE* 2009.1428).

1.2 Manuscript Transmission

1.2.1 Imperial “Literary” Letters

Letter collections are an important genre in antiquity, especially late antiquity, and some contain letters to or from emperors.²⁸ The most important and rarest is the tenth book of the letters of Pliny the Younger, which principally represents his two-sided correspondence with Trajan (r. 98–117), while he was the emperor’s legate in Bithynia-Pontus (c.110–112).²⁹ This provides by far our best picture of how emperor and governor interacted, although the collection is probably more crafted and artificial than sometimes appreciated.³⁰ Similar, but one-sided, are the *Relationes* of Symmachus,³¹ representing his referrals of problems to the emperors during his tenure as urban prefect at Rome (384–385), although the collection contains no imperial replies.³² The correspondence of Fronto includes letters exchanged with Antoninus Pius (r. 138–161), Marcus Aurelius (r. 161–180), and Lucius Verus (r. 161–169), but is generally too private and personal in nature to count as typical state correspondence, especially as it includes material to Marcus before he became emperor.³³ This applies less to the letters and other works of the emperor Julian (r. 360–363), since these cross so many boundaries of date, form, and language,³⁴ and contain much that can be considered state correspondence, even if sometimes a little bizarre, such as the literary polemic in the *Misopogon* or “Beard-Hater” publicly displayed in Antioch in 362, which nonetheless still represents a genuine, if rather unusual, manner for an emperor to communicate with his subjects.³⁵

1.2.2 Legal Sources

The legal sources provide by far the bulk of imperial texts.³⁶ However, most of their material has been edited, abbreviated, and recycled, sometimes more than once, and often long after the original texts were created. The two principal collections, which preserve the lion’s share, are the Theodosian Code (437) and the Justinian Code (2nd ed., 534). The former contains some 2,500 edited extracts from imperial general legislation, mostly in the form of letters to high officeholders (especially the praetorian prefects), dating from the 4th and 5th centuries

(313–437), arranged under thematic titles in sixteen books.³⁷ The latter contains similar material, edited and arranged under titles in twelve books, recycling texts from the Theodosian Code, but adding later material up into the 6th century, while also including a mass of private rescripts taken from two now lost late 3rd century collections (the Gregorian and Hermogenian Codes), with the result that overall it covers the period from Hadrian (r. 117–138) right up to 534, furnishing about 4,500 items.³⁸ Additional imperial texts survive in the works of the classical jurists (1st to 3rd centuries), although generally only as edited into Justinian's *Digest* (533).³⁹ Further texts are preserved as quoted in other minor late antique legal works, although often deriving from one of the codes.⁴⁰ Finally, there are the sets of "Novels," that is new constitutions, which represent the legislation of various 5th-century emperors (438–468)⁴¹ and of Justinian (r. 527–565).⁴² All these extravagant texts number over 1,500 in total. In much of this material, it is quite difficult to distinguish between letters that are parts of general enactments widely circulated, and letters that represent correspondence specifically intended for an individual officeholder, usually in reply to a *consultatio*.⁴³ This is less problematic with the Novels, since they are generally complete and unedited and thus often reveal the background to a measure, which would probably have been edited out if recycled into a code (as can be seen with those Novels of Theodosius II and Marcian, r. 450–457, taken into the Justinian Code).

The imperial texts edited into the codes seem generally to have derived from copies in the imperial archives, but sometimes from letters preserved in the archives of recipients.⁴⁴ Some, especially private rescripts or texts used by jurists, were probably copied down from texts on public display.

1.2.3 Christian Sources⁴⁵

From the early 4th century onward Christian writers in a wide variety of genres quote extensively and verbatim from imperial letters and documents, a tradition that can perhaps be traced back ultimately to the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus (37–c. 100),⁴⁶ but was taken up enthusiastically by Eusebius of Caesarea (d. 339)⁴⁷ and later writers.⁴⁸ Inevitably this means that many texts are only known in translation, most typically from Latin into Greek.⁴⁹ We should also take note here of church councils,⁵⁰ where imperial documents are usually prominent, and proto-canonical collections⁵¹ like the Sirmondian Constitutions⁵² and the *Collectio Avellana*.⁵³

1.3 *What Has Survived, and Why?*

It will be clear from the above summary that the balance in numbers of texts is heavily weighted toward the late Empire, especially since many of the earlier texts survive only as edited in later collections. However the early Empire is generally richer in texts that have suffered less redaction or manipulation.

Another important feature is the fact that sometimes the same text survives via more than one route, so that fuller or earlier versions can act as control texts and give us a clearer idea of the likely editorial processes in cases where comparanda do not survive. Much of the Justinian Code material can be compared to source-texts in the Theodosian Code, the post-Theodosian Novels, or elsewhere. The Theodosian Code texts in their turn can be compared to fuller versions in the Sirmondian Constitutions,⁵⁴ and in two cases with inscribed laws.⁵⁵ Indeed, several other texts in legal or literary works are known from earlier copies surviving in inscriptions or papyri.⁵⁶ Overall, there is great complexity in the forms and manner in which versions of imperial letters and other texts have reached us.⁵⁷

Finally, it should be emphasized that the imperial texts under consideration most often survive because of their high normative value, being used and reused over many centuries, even into the modern era. In the short term also, however, the great constitutional authority of the emperor rendered all texts issued in his name highly desirable, providing powerful weapons in legal dispute and even Christian polemic which might be employed in ways never originally envisaged. For this reason, emperors attempted with differing success to keep the afterlife of imperial texts under their control, by defining if or when they were legally valid. In particular, they tried to draw a line between texts intended to apply only in the case or circumstances for which they were issued, and those that encapsulated general legislation or at least rules which could serve as precedents.⁵⁸ Ultimately, this was precisely why the imperial codes came into existence, as definitive collections. Nonetheless, most imperial texts must have been highly ephemeral, even if for that reason they are less well represented in our evidence.

1.4 Frequency of Correspondence

Given the uneven evidence, it is difficult to assess the volume of correspondence or documents being sent around the Empire. Evidence from Egypt makes it clear that the number of petitions dealt with by officials other than the emperor could quickly reach into thousands.⁵⁹ However, we never have a full set of imperial documents for any period. Our closest is perhaps for the years 293–294. The Hermogenian Code seems to have consisted almost solely of private rescripts issued in those two years alone, written for Diocletian (r. 284–305) by his *magister libellorum*, Hermogenian.⁶⁰ There are over 900, certainly not all that were originally collected in the Code (which does not survive, its contents principally preserved as re-edited into the Justinian Code), and themselves presumably only the more legally interesting. Clearly the number of private rescripts issued per year by the emperor ran into many thousands. It also appears that the pattern of issue varied with the emperor's movements: there is a glut at the end of 294 once Diocletian settles down for the winter at Nicomedia, perhaps reflecting the crowd of petitioners who preferred to await his anticipated arrival in his principal residence rather than chase him across the Balkans.⁶¹

Pliny's correspondence with Trajan consists of 124 letters.⁶² The first fifteen belong to the period before Pliny's governorship, a salutary reminder that "private" correspondence is not so far removed from "state" correspondence, since some indeed require Trajan to write to officials (*Letters* X.5–7, 10).⁶³ Of the remaining 109 letters, 62 are from Pliny to Trajan, with only 47 being the latter's replies (generally much briefer).⁶⁴ They cover a period of two years (c. 110–112), although unfortunately, as the letters are not closely dated (unlike Cicero's correspondence from Cilicia⁶⁵), the exact interpretation of their chronological spread or time lags for replies cannot be assessed. However, letters commemorating events such as the anniversary of Trajan's accession, if they are taken to be in their correct place sequentially, give an approximate shape to the material.⁶⁶ It is possible to argue that, as Pliny settled into his role, he needed to consult Trajan less often, since two-thirds of his letters belong to his first year in office and only one-third to his second. However, we do not know when that year ended (Pliny probably died in office), nor can we be certain that all his letters were included. However, it should be noted that some of the letters are rather about "private" business, no different from the early letters in Book 10, and so would have been sent anyway (e.g. *Letters* X.94, 104). It is notable that not one of the letters from Trajan is sent on Trajan's initiative, but that each responds to a missive from Pliny. However, no letter from Trajan prompted by a third party survives either.

When we compare Pliny to Symmachus, we find that the latter in a little over six months (June 384–January/February 385) as urban prefect in Rome managed to send almost 50 letters to the court at Milan.⁶⁷ Symmachus was, of course, much closer geographically to the emperor than was Pliny, and this may have made more frequent communication seem practical (on distance as a factor, see also section 5.2). Although in the past some scholars detected impatience in Trajan's replies to Pliny, the latter seems to have troubled the emperor far less than Symmachus did. Perhaps Pliny "got on with it" rather more than his sometimes diffident style (a literary artifice?) would have us believe, or else, as a specially appointed legate with detailed *mandata*, he may have felt less need to consult. Symmachus seems to have had to tread more warily, with more potentially explosive high-profile cases, disruptive fellow-officials and subordinates, and the likelihood of malicious misrepresentation of his actions at an imperial court that was perhaps uncomfortably close.⁶⁸

Nonetheless, governors enjoyed considerable latitude. Indeed, despite some risk of prosecution for maladministration (the fate of two of Pliny's predecessors in the decade before him),⁶⁹ governors, especially in the Principate, could act with great independence and little oversight, as shown by admittedly hostile witnesses such as Philo and Josephus discussing Egypt and Judaea. Not every governor, for instance, seems to have felt Pliny's need for imperial reassurance on how to match punishment to status.⁷⁰ Others, by contrast, might prevaricate or postpone, leaving the hard decision or difficult problem to a successor, especially

if their period of office was short. This was especially true in the later Empire, when the ordinary provincial governor seems a weaker and more vulnerable figure, with rather restricted functions and interfering superiors, and hemmed in by powerful local notables.⁷¹ There is, therefore, a complex interplay of factors in how frequently a governor might feel the need to correspond with the emperor.

1.5 The Question of Archives

There is little information about the imperial archives, their content and location. The public documents of the Roman Republic were kept in the Tabularium adjacent to the Capitoline in Rome,⁷² and although it may have contained some records of the emperor's involvement with public acts, it was not a central repository for imperial correspondence or documents. There was probably no single imperial archive for all types of record. Those of which we know most are the *commentarii*, which seem to have contained copies of hearings, official correspondence, and other acts, organized by emperor and perhaps by type of act.⁷³ These included all the letters granting citizenship, which according to details from the Tabula Banasitana (177) were arranged by emperor right back to Augustus.⁷⁴ How easy it was in fact to locate items is far from clear. General searches of unindexed material are likely to have been impossible,⁷⁵ although knowing which emperor (or year?) should have been sufficient, especially for relatively recent items. Thus Trajan was apparently able to have the *commentarii* checked without difficulty for specific imperial letters (Pliny, *Letters* X.66). He only does this, however, because Pliny does not trust the authenticity of the versions read out to him by litigants in a hearing (*Letters* X.65), and elsewhere Pliny's copies, probably from his predecessors' *acta*, are sufficient (*Letters* X.58, 72). Permission for people to take copies from the archives was sometimes given, as with a case under Antoninus Pius regarding a ruling of Hadrian, which the emperor asks his slaves to produce.⁷⁶ Suetonius, as *ab epistulis* (section 2.1.2), clearly also had access to the personal letters of the imperial family, and it is sometimes suggested that lack of such material quoted in his later imperial biographies indicates his loss of both office and access.⁷⁷

It might be imagined that the various codes used the imperial archives as their principal source, but this is not easily demonstrable and has caused considerable scholarly dispute. It has been argued that the compiler of the Gregorian Code consulted archives in Rome, but found little before Septimius Severus because a devastating fire in and around the Palatine at the end of the reign of Commodus (192) destroyed most existing documents (famously, along with the library and recipe books of Galen, which were stored in an imperial warehouse).⁷⁸ However, at least some documents in that code must have derived ultimately from publicly posted copies, indicated by headings such as *exemplum* [sc. copy] *sacrarum litterarum*.⁷⁹ Even for the Theodosian Code, there is reason to suppose that only the early 5th century material came primarily from the archives in Constantinople

or Ravenna.⁸⁰ Indeed, the mobility and multiplicity of emperors between the 3rd and 5th centuries mean that, between the emperor starting to float free from Rome and eventually coming to rest permanently in Constantinople, archival materials were likely to have been scattered untidily across numerous cities, which served as short- or medium-term imperial capitals (e.g. Trier, Milan, Sirmium, Nicomedia, Antioch), especially as emperors lacking the luxury of hindsight may have considered these other bases as permanent as Constantinople was to become.⁸¹

When we consider archival practice at the receiving end for imperial letters, we know even less. Pliny's correspondence with Trajan was surely published from the contents of his own papers.⁸² Were Trajan's originals kept? Were they left behind in Bithynia for his successors, or only copies of them? Or were only those known whose contents he had deliberately posted up in public or had read into the records of some hearing? Specific evidence for a special archive for provincial governors is thin, but no doubt local records were kept of a governor's court hearings and publicly posted edicts and letters, since Pliny was clearly able to access decisions by previous proconsuls of Bithynia (*Letters* X.56). There does seem to have been a prefectural archive and a Roman-style *tablinum* in Alexandria.⁸³ There were extensive proconsular and other archives in Africa.⁸⁴ Not all officials, however, were necessarily able to maintain an archive, as Justinian complained in regard to the *defensores civitatis*.⁸⁵ Otherwise, there will often have been public repositories for documents in cities across the Empire, but these, certainly under the Principate, were not part of the apparatus of the central government and, apart from city records, served rather for the secure keeping or public registration of the documents of private individuals (e.g. wills and land transfers), although such records of ownership became in the later Empire tied in to the tax system.⁸⁶ However, drawing a clear distinction between public and private in the paperwork of governors or other officials is anachronistic.⁸⁷ Possibly Diocletian's mysterious letter to the governor of Phoenice stating that only the authentic subscribed original rescripts and not copies (*exempla*) be "entered" (*insinuentur*)⁸⁸ may have meant that governors were not to retain personal possession of replies they received. Yet it is also possible that it was precisely the papers of the great senatorial families in Rome and Italy that Theodosius's commissioners in the 430s raided for the imperial letters their ancestors had received as urban prefects or proconsuls of Africa.

One thing is very clear. Imperial texts were seen as desirable, and by more than just their addressees. Copies were taken down and circulated, as witness both contemporary and later copies of even the most trivial of rescripts and rulings of Severus and Caracalla from their rare imperial visit to Egypt in 199–200.⁸⁹ Augustine, writing in the 420s from Africa to his friend Alypius in Italy, appends a copy of a letter of Honorius to the praetorian prefect, but presumes that copies of imperial letters are in fact more easily available there.⁹⁰ When in 339 a

ten-year-old rescript of Constantine was cited in a court case for which it had not been issued, no one questioned its authenticity (although that may have been established in a lost part of the proceedings).⁹¹ Imperial texts were now the loose cannon, rattling around the Empire and not yet strapped down into the codes.

2 GENERATING CORRESPONDENCE: PETITION AND RESPONSE

At the core of how correspondence functioned within the Roman Empire is the concept of “petition and response,” following the magisterial exposition of the way the emperor worked in Fergus Millar’s *The Emperor in the Roman World*, originally published in 1977.⁹² Thus, the emperor generally writes letters or issues documents because someone has asked him to do so, whether an officeholder, a city, or a private person. This also means that the matters addressed to the emperor, however important to their originators, were often extremely local or personal. There was no intrinsic criterion that made matters too insignificant or trivial for the emperor to address. Letters of all types should have reached him personally.⁹³ Even the creation of official hierarchies and inappellable jurisdictions did not mean that direct access to the emperor was automatically cut off, although we should not ignore the practical difficulties of getting one’s own business noticed amid the clamor for the emperor’s attention. The reasons for contacting the emperor can be divided into four, as easily seen from the correspondence of Pliny: (1) referrals of administrative or legal problems for guidance or resolution; (2) requests for benefits or privileges for oneself or others, including letters of recommendation; (3) reports or purely informative messages;⁹⁴ and (4) felicitations for happy events or on anniversaries. These purposes may, of course, overlap. For instance, a city conveying congratulations to the emperor will also have requested or expected some benefit in return, if only confirmation of existing privileges.⁹⁵ Letters could be miscellanies of various content.⁹⁶ And, of course, not every letter would necessarily generate a reply.

Given the mass of petitions and other matters pressing upon the emperor, it might be no surprise if he had little time to initiate correspondence. Certainly much of our evidence supports this pattern, whether the imperial letters granting privileges to cities in response to their pleas via letters and embassies, or Trajan replying to Pliny’s queries. However, some letters were inherently different, most particularly letters of appointment and *mandata*. In the later Empire, the position is more complex. Much proactive-seeming legislation, most of it in the form of letters, is circulated round the empire via a host of officials. This is a real change, but perhaps not so much as at first appears. When we have fuller versions of documents rather than relying upon the edited texts in the codes, we can often see how quite bold initiatives arise from specific matters brought to the emperor’s attention. For instance, Anthemius’s first Novel (468), which

made it illegal thereafter for women to marry their freedmen, arose from the case of a woman called Julia, who had petitioned the emperor to confirm the validity of her marriage.⁹⁷ Had this been edited into a code, the background context might well have been excised. Nonetheless, the emperor had decided to turn this individual case into a general enactment. A great deal of legislation was also generated by *suggestiones* coming from officials (section 2.1.3). Whether this last matches a genuine idea of “petition and response” is less clear, since such cases are often part of dialogue and dispute within the central administrative departments. Given that the result of such law-generating activity was to have general legislation actively circulated to dozens of officeholders, this is certainly far removed from the more purely responsive case-by-case style of the Principate. It is also clear that most major shifts in religious policy are more than ad hoc responses to individual circumstances, although neither does it preclude most of the “religious” correspondence being generated in much the same way as other matters.⁹⁸ Thus, while Diocletian’s launch of the “Great Persecution” against the Christians in 303 is a major imperial initiative,⁹⁹ his hostile rescript against the Manichees in the previous year appears to be solely a response to a query from the proconsul of Africa.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, whereas Constantine (r. 306–337) actively circulated letters on Christian matters to his subjects,¹⁰¹ by contrast his unhappy involvement in the Donatist controversy in Africa arose after he was petitioned to resolve the dispute.¹⁰²

Thus, while I consider “petition and response” to be the most important tool for understanding how the Empire worked, it should not be a straitjacket constraining interpretation at all times and places. It may, therefore, be useful to keep in mind that imperial correspondence could be generated in various ways. First, there were those letters written back in response to official referrals or private requests; second, letters were written to someone as a result of the request or referral by a third party; third, letters were generated by the emperor himself; and finally, letters were generated within the central administration.

In the following, I will discuss who composed the message and who penned the actual letter.

2.1 *Who Composed the Letters?*

2.1.1 *The Emperor*

Personal letters, such as those between Marcus Aurelius and Fronto, must have been composed by the emperor himself, irrespective of whether he either wrote them by hand or dictated to an amanuensis (section 2.2). For official correspondence, it seems likely that the emperor will have dictated letters himself to the most important addressees. This is generally assumed, for instance, in the correspondence between Trajan and Pliny. Trajan certainly gives the impression that he has himself engaged with the issues raised, for instance reading attached

documents (*Letters* X.48, 60, 107). No doubt as a general rule, the more important the subject matter and the more significant the recipient, the greater the emperor's personal involvement will have been, even if he only indicated the principal points he wished to include in his reply. The more technical the contents, however, the more probable it is that the letter will have been drafted in part if not wholly by a suitable subordinate. As always, there is a change from early to late Empire, since rhetorical styles grow more elaborate and it becomes more likely that emperors used "borrowed" eloquence.¹⁰³ Of course, emperors will always have differed in the degree of both their literary ability and their administrative assiduity. These considerations make difficult any attempt to answer the question of how far an individual emperor's input in terms of either policy, content, approach, or style is reflected in documents issued in his name. Fronto actually addresses to Marcus Aurelius a critique of the style of one of his edicts.¹⁰⁴ There have been numerous attempts by modern scholars to find the man in the text¹⁰⁵—for instance, Trajan in his correspondence with Pliny,¹⁰⁶ Julian in his variegated output,¹⁰⁷ and Justinian, whether in law or theology.¹⁰⁸ However, the amount of material surviving for the earlier period does not easily lend itself to stylometric or similar analyses, while in the later material the emperor generally disappears behind the bureaucratic process.

2.1.2 The Palatine Secretaries

Despite the very personal nature of government and the emperor's involvement, it was not practical for him to compose all letters going out in his name. From the very beginning of the Principate, the emperor needed help. Republican Rome had had little in the way of public administrative staff, and magistrates and governors will have had to rely heavily on their own households (primarily freedmen and slaves) to provide much of the support they needed. This was true also of Augustus. From the very beginning, therefore, the emperor's freedmen and slaves became important in the running of the state administration, and there soon developed specialized bureaus to deal with different aspects of the emperor's business.¹⁰⁹ Although the head of each bureau (in modern parlance the "palatine secretary") was initially a freedman, the prominence accorded them grated with status-conscious senators and other members of the élite. As a result, once the reality of the emperor's anomalous position became accepted, members of the equestrian order (who ranked just below senators) overcame their dislike of long-term paid, therefore dishonorable, even servile, employment to assume the chief posts. One of the earliest known is Suetonius as *ab epistulis* to Hadrian.¹¹⁰ Under these equestrian secretaries, however, members of the imperial *familia* continued to provide the bulk of the personnel. By the 4th century, however, the bureaus, formalized under the name of *scrinia*, had acquired mostly free, salaried staff.

As far as the production of the emperor's pronouncements is concerned, the officials responsible were the *ab epistulis*, dealing with letters (in Latin); the *ab epistulis Graecis*, dealing with letters in Greek; the *a libellis*, dealing with petitions; and the *a memoria*, whose exact job description is uncertain, possibly dealing with the records or *commentarii*, but also involved in the production of at least some pronouncements (perhaps edicts, later *adnotationes*). There was also the *a cognitionibus*, who dealt with imperial hearings, although he did not necessarily draw up any documents they produced, the *a studiis*, who had "literary" duties (a cultural adviser?), and the *a bibliothecariis* in charge of libraries. By the late 3rd century the officeholder was styled *magister*, for instance *magister epistularum* ("master of letters").

These posts functioned from early in the Principate right down to the 6th century.¹¹¹ By the mid-4th century they were joined by a more senior official, the quaestor (often known as the *quaestor Sacri Palatii*, quaestor of the Sacred Palace), whose main task was drawing up legislation, which meant in practice most edicts and general letters, at least those that survive in our evidence.¹¹²

The Roman bureaucracy was never meritocratic, so that the holders of the various posts above did not necessarily abound in appropriate skills. Nonetheless, it is true that men of great literary (Suetonius, Ausonius) or juristic abilities (Ulpian, Tribonian) were at times chosen for these jobs. Indeed, they might serve in a series of such palatine posts. The existence of key officials in charge of the production of particular types of document has led to the question being posed of whether their hand can be found consistently in the composition of texts. Indeed, this could raise the further question of whether dividing up texts not by the reigns of emperors but by the periods in office of palatine secretaries would make more sense as an aid to understanding and interpreting them. This is precisely what the work of Tony Honoré has sought to do, and it has been widely accepted by many, if not all, scholars, including Millar and Liebs (and myself).¹¹³ His argument is that there is sufficient usable dated source material, principally in the two codes (Theodosian, Justinian), despite the fact that these texts have been edited in various ways, to construct a sort of stylistic *fasti* (list of officeholders), dividing up the material according to chronologically identifiable features of language and style. This he has done for the *a libellis/magistri libellorum* for the period 193–305,¹¹⁴ for the quaestors of the Theodosian dynasty (379–455)¹¹⁵ and for the quaestors of the 6th century (500–555).¹¹⁶ Further, he has been able to propose in these *fasti* several convincing identifications between these "stylistic blocks" and historical figures (Papinian, Ulpian, Modestinus, Hermogenian, Ausonius, and Tribonian among others).

It must be recognized, however, that this has not been applied extensively to what we might call routine correspondence between emperors and officials, simply because the type of material available in bulk is either private rescripts (3rd century) or edicts/letters as part of general legislation (4th to 6th centuries).

Detecting the hand of the *magister epistularum* has proved far more difficult, and the limited results have been more tentative, built on scraps, being no more than a byproduct of work on the *magistri libellorum* and overly dependent on the assumption that possible stylistic markers of an identifiable *magister libellorum* found to be present in texts, which are not private rescripts, suggest that he has gone on to be *magister epistularum* or *magister memoriae*.¹¹⁷ Other evidence, however, suggests that the idiosyncrasies of those composing the emperors' letters were sometimes apparent to contemporaries. For instance, Aspasius, a 3rd-century *ab epistulis Graecis*, was criticized for using a style considered inappropriate in documents appearing in the emperor's name.¹¹⁸ Others, however, might be considered exemplary.¹¹⁹

Finally, although style may change according to quaestor or *magister*, there were also differences between genres. Private rescripts tend to be written in clear if technical legal language in the tradition of the classical jurists, although individual *magistri* may add touches of rhetoric.¹²⁰ By contrast, edicts and letters come by the late 3rd century to be composed in an ornate rhetorical style, a hallmark of the late Roman state, whose obscurity could baffle not just us poor moderns but even contemporaries.¹²¹ Compare, for instance, how short and simple codicils of office transform into lengthy and elaborate treatises. Here is Marcus Aurelius in the mid-2nd century:

Caesar Antoninus Augustus to his own Domitius Marsianus, greeting. Having long been eager to promote you to the splendor of a procuratorship at 200,000 sesterces, I seize the opportunity which now offers. Succeed, therefore, to Marius Pudens with every hope of my continued favor, so long as you know yourself to retain your integrity, diligence and experience. Farewell, my Marsianus, dearest to me.¹²²

Contrast the lengthy pro-forma letter written in the 6th century by Cassiodorus as quaestor to Theoderic (king of Italy, r. 493–526) for appointment to, appropriately and illustratively for us, the office of quaestor itself:

(1) If honors gain in distinction the more they enjoy my gaze, if the ruler's frequent presence shows his affection, so no magistrate can be more glorious than he who is admitted to a share in my counsels. For to others I entrust the procurement of the public revenues, to others the hearing of lawsuits, to others the rights of my estates. The quaestorship I value as the words of my tongue, and take it wholeheartedly to myself. (2) Of necessity, this office is linked intimately to my thoughts, that it may speak in its own words what it knows as my sentiments; it discards its own will and judgment, and so absorbs the purpose of my mind that you would think its discourse really came from me. How hard it is for the subject to assume the speech of the ruler, to be able to express what may be supposed my

own, and, advanced to public honour, to create a noble lie. [3–4 omitted] (5) ... And therefore, prompted by the fame of your wisdom and eloquence, for this indiction, I allot you, by God's favor, the quaestorship, the glory of letters, the temple of *civilitas*, the begetter of every honor, the home of self-restraint, and seat of all virtues; so act that you strive to be equal to the duties just described. (6) For to you, the provinces transmit their petitions; from you, the Senate seeks the aid of the laws; from you experts request the justice they have learnt; and you must satisfy all those who may demand legal help from me. But, while doing all this, you must be carried away by no pride, gnawed by no grudge, never pleased by the misfortunes of others, since what is hateful to the prince cannot be right for the quaestor. Wield a prince's power with a subject's rank. Ennobled as my mouthpiece, so speak that you may still think yourself due to render account before my judgement seat, where a man will either be condemned and receive his reward, or be praised and gain the glory of his upright ways.¹²³

2.1.3 Consilium and Consistory

Even if we allow for the fact that the palatine secretaries/*magistri scriniorum* or the quaestor were key in composing documents (whether preliminary drafting or later "writing up"), this does not mean that they had sole control over their substantive content as opposed to their tone and style. The emperor took advice and sought information and the role of his advisers should not be ignored, although much input into decision making will have been informal.¹²⁴ It had been longstanding Roman practice for holders of office to turn to a council of friends before making important decisions or issuing judgments.¹²⁵ Naturally following this practice, the emperor also had his *consilium*,¹²⁶ as indeed governors and other magistrates continued to do.¹²⁷ This was, however, an ad hoc body, without any fixed membership, nor did it require particular qualifications. Palatine officeholders were not necessarily present. Anyone could be called upon to take part, as both serious and satirical treatments of imperial councils attest.¹²⁸ It was, however, not unusual for some persons with suitable expertise to be included, when appropriate; as, for instance, a jurist when there were legal rulings to make or cases to hear.¹²⁹ There was no compulsion upon the emperor, however, to debate the contents of letters in council.

By the mid-4th century this had changed. The adoption of greater court ceremonial led to the replacement of the informal *consilium* by the highly formal consistory (where everyone, except the emperor, had to stand!), whose membership was regulated by office and rank and whose proceedings followed increasingly elaborate protocol.¹³⁰ Important documents were now presented to the consistory in drafts made by the quaestor. However, there had developed a system of

suggestiones, whereby legislative proposals would be made by officials, often the quaestor himself (most notably Tribonian and the Fifty Decisions, which latter were designed to settle points of law long in dispute between jurists),¹³¹ but it could come from one of the praetorian prefects or others within the high palatine ministries. This may have been more frequent than our evidence attests, as the explanatory background enabling this to be understood is usually edited out of Theodosian or Justinian Code texts and can best be seen in the full text versions of the Novels.¹³² One law of 446 (*CJ* I.14.8; Honoré 1998: 13) gives a snapshot of what at that point was the usual process. The proposed content of a law, whether or not based on *suggestiones*, was debated by core palatine officials in a preliminary meeting. Then a draft dictated by the quaestor was discussed in a second meeting (the law also added a new role for the Senate). The revised text was then put before the consistory for final approval, before receiving the emperor's *subscriptio* (section 2.2.2). It is certainly good organizational practice for all the serious groundwork to have been done before an important meeting, leaving as little as possible vague or subject to chance. Therefore, how genuine consistory debates were is difficult to tell, although much of the legislation on administrative matters bears the hallmarks of "turf wars" between the ministries,¹³³ and this may have been fought out in consistory. However, as the consistory became ever larger and more formal, so its effective role seems to have become increasingly nominal, at least in the 6th century.

Much of the above most relates to legislation of a general character. Although the quaestor and the palatine *magistri* answered *consultationes* from officeholders and petitions from others, it is not clear how many of these would have been discussed at such a high level. For instance, did the letter of Theodosius II to the *dux* in Egypt in answer to a petition from the bishop at Syene¹³⁴ need to be discussed in consistory? It seems unlikely that every communication would or could have been so treated, although we can never presume that anything was intrinsically too local or trivial to end up on the agenda.

Although *suggestiones* were often a key stage lying behind the text of a document as finally issued, unfortunately we do not possess differing versions of the earlier stages to enable comparison. However, one example is perhaps usefully illustrative at least for letters issued in response to *consultationes* or petitions. The inscribed dossier from the community of Orcistus in Phrygia consists of four documents relating to their civic status.¹³⁵ The last is later in date (331), but the other three belong closely together (324/326). The text heading the dossier is the imperial *adnotatio* (Fig. 7.4A) addressed to the Orcistans and subscribed by the emperor, granting restoration of city status. There follows a letter from Constantine to Ablabius, the vicar of Asiana, towards the end of which the imperial decision is repeated almost verbatim (Fig. 7.4B1 and Fig. 7.4B2). This we would expect—that is, that the same decision would be replicated in different formats of text.

Adnotatio to the Orcistans (col. 1.1–7)

The Sacred Letter.

These concerns that you mentioned in your request rightly demand that you obtain the restoration of both your name and your rank. Therefore we decree that through the intercession of the vicar whatever has been diminished be restored to the wholeness of the ancient honour, so that both you and your town, protected by <your>¹³⁶ diligence, might enjoy that splendour you requested of the laws and of your name.

Below: I have written.

Letter to Ablabius (col. 1.42–col. 2.16)

Since they (the Orcistans) requested that Our Clemency grant them their ancient legal standing and the title of city, we provided an opinion of this sort as indicated by the copies of our decision attached below with their requests.

For those concerns that they mentioned in their request rightly demand that they obtain the restoration of both their name and their rank. Therefore we decree that through the intercession of Your Dignity whatever has been diminished be restored to the wholeness of the ancient honour, so that both they and their town, protected by <their> diligence, might enjoy that splendour you requested of the laws and of their name. It is proper therefore that Your Sincerity rapidly fulfil for these petitioners what we have most promptly decided on behalf of the dignity of our reign. Farewell, Ablabius, most dear and pleasing to Us.

But the letter also mirrors the claims made (i.e. their location at a key cross-roads) in the accompanying petition of the Orcistans, a copy (*exemplum*) of which follows the letter. This also is logical, that the contents of petitions should be reflected back in the documents generated to answer them. We may presume something similar for *consultationes* from governors.

2.1.4 Formal Elements

Originally letters of emperors had simple addresses and farewells, as in private correspondence. Over time there was a tendency for the emperor's titles to become more elaborate and to be included in his greeting, sometimes in lengthy versions, while farewell subscriptions also lengthened (section 2.2.2).¹³⁷ Further, when there were multiple emperors reigning jointly, which was increasingly common from the mid-2nd century onward, imperial documents would be issued formally in the names of all the emperors,¹³⁸ and those writing to or petitioning one emperor were supposed formally to address the entire imperial college.¹³⁹ However, in the text of letters, the individual ruler sometimes comes to the surface—for instance, occasionally made apparent where the majestic plural

is replaced by the singular—and this may even reflect the emperor's personal emphasis.¹⁴⁰

Vocatives from emperor to addressee tend to be of the type *Secunde carissime* ("dearest Secundus"), so Trajan to Pliny (who calls Trajan *domine* ["lord"] in return), although extra adjectives can be added. Thus praetorian prefects come to be called routinely *parens carissime et amantissime* ("dearest and most beloved parent").¹⁴¹ However, from the 2nd century, third person forms of address often replace first and second persons. Emperors are referred to as, for instance, "Our/Your Clemency"¹⁴² or "Gentleness" (*Mansuetudo*) or "Tranquillity," while officials are (most commonly) "My/Your Gravity" or "Devotion."¹⁴³ This development, however, reflects general changes in epistolary styles and is not confined to imperial correspondence.

One final feature shows the long-lasting preservation of Republican practice. In writing to the Senate,¹⁴⁴ the emperor even into the 6th century uses a style of address surviving from the time when Republican generals in the field were reporting back to the Senate, as attested in the correspondence of Cicero.¹⁴⁵ Thus, in 337 Constantine and his sons use the old formula when they write that they "give greetings to the consuls, praetors, tribunes of the plebs and their Senate. If you and your children are well, that is good; we and our armies are well."¹⁴⁶ Almost 200 years later, Anastasius (r. 491–518) still employs this same salutation.¹⁴⁷

2.2 Who Penned the Letters?

Emperors sometimes wrote letters in their own hand. Suetonius mentions seeing letters of Augustus with his own idiosyncratic spellings, although the letters he quotes are family ones.¹⁴⁸ In general, it is unlikely that much official correspondence would be personally written by the emperor, barring exceptional circumstances, as when Constantine is said to have done so to the king of Persia,¹⁴⁹ or for reasons of secrecy (section 5.3). However, he might correct a letter.¹⁵⁰ For instance, Julian seems to have been sufficiently enraged to add in his own hand a whole section to his already ill-tempered letter to the prefect of Egypt about Athanasius.¹⁵¹

2.2.1 The Role of Secretaries

More routinely, letters will have been dictated to and then written out by secretaries, usually expert in shorthand (*notarii*).¹⁵² There developed specific "chancery" styles of script, which will have required special training and changed only slowly, becoming rather ossified, especially in the later Empire, although not all types of document will have been written in the same style, nor were all scripts confined to imperial documents.¹⁵³ Particularly notable are the ornate "celestial letters" whose use was restricted to the imperial chancery alone (the proconsul of Africa was scolded for allowing his office to use them)¹⁵⁴, but even then only

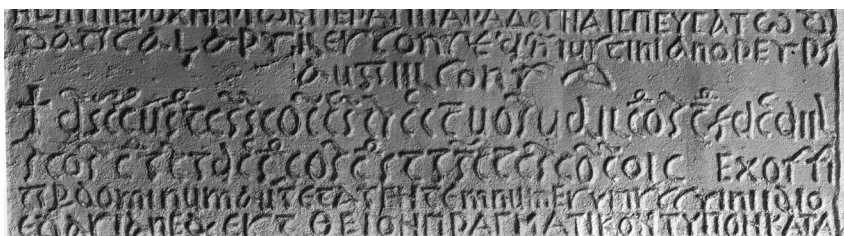


FIGURE 7.5: Celestial letters on the Justinianic dossier from Didyma, 533. Photo by Denis Feissel, with kind permission.

for certain parts of documents. Examples of them have been identified in papyri and on inscriptions, as in the recently published Justinianic dossier from Didyma (Fig. 7.5).¹⁵⁵

2.2.2 The Emperor's Subscription and Sealing

It was usual for the emperor to subscribe a personal valediction, although not the introductory greeting. Commodus is criticized for being lazy and writing only *vale* ("Farewell!"), but this is in a late source, which may be comparing early and late practice anachronistically, since later formulae are rather longer (even if not that long overall).¹⁵⁶ However, writing even four or six or ten words instead of one would no doubt have cost much time, given that the emperor must have had numerous documents to subscribe. Some copies of texts often indicate the change in handwriting with a phrase such as *alia manu* or *manu divina*, which enables us to identify the imperial subscription clearly.¹⁵⁷ The sole surviving original subscription of Theodosius II, in a Latin letter to a commander in Egypt, reads *bene valere te cupimus* ("We desire you to fare well!") (Fig. 7.2).¹⁵⁸ Subscriptions to Christian clergy usually have a Christian flavor, e.g. *divinitas te servet per multos annos* ("May the divinity preserve you for many years!"), attested up to the 7th century.¹⁵⁹ It is important to remember that government remained highly personal and that the emperor must have had to approve great numbers of documents directly. Even private rescripts, which were issued in their thousands every year, should in theory have borne the emperor's *rescripti* ("I have replied"). However, there must always have been pressure to delegate, or for documents to be issued corruptly or at least by taking shortcuts. Julian, attempting to prevent abuses of the public post, insisted that only a small number of permits subscribed by himself or the praetorian prefect was to be valid, although one wonders how practical such an intention was (*CTh* VIII.5.12). However, whatever we assume for private rescripts or travel permits, letters to officials or indeed high-ranking individuals not holding formal office (senators, bishops) must always have been subscribed by the emperor in person.

Finally as regards writing, the emperor eventually came to subscribe some documents in purple ink, use of which was reserved to him alone.¹⁶⁰

In addition to writing a subscription to letters, the emperor had a signet ring. This seems to have been most important in the early Empire, when the emperor still acted like his élite contemporaries.¹⁶¹ Thus in 23 BC a seriously ill Augustus passed his ring to Agrippa, marking him out as a successor (Dio Cassius LIII.30.1–2). The device on Augustus's final ring (his own head; Suetonius, *Div. Aug.* 50) may have become standard, as we find Hadrian using it to seal letters patent (*tabulae apertae*) to the Arval Brethren in 118.¹⁶² However, this is about the only evidence we have for the use of the signet ring, and it suggests that it may not have been used to seal documents shut (see section 3), but, like the emperor's autograph, functioned as a statement of authenticity. No known intaglios depicting emperors are considered to be imperial seals,¹⁶³ and, indeed, seals bearing the emperor's image could be used by even lowly officials in the provinces.¹⁶⁴ Thus, although imperial lead seals, for instance, are known from the first century and onwards into the Byzantine period, the surviving early imperial examples seem to be associated with officials sealing fiscal goods and are seldom likely to represent the emperor's personal sealing of documents. Seals of gold, silver, lead, and wax were certainly used to seal the emperor's documents in the Byzantine period, but the descriptions of such imperial sealing practices are much later (tenth century) and it is unclear how far back to retroject procedures and which surviving sealings are truly the emperors' own.¹⁶⁵

Emperors do not seem to have used the "sign manual" like late medieval or modern kings, signing their names to documents,¹⁶⁶ even though it was standard Roman practice for witnesses to subscribe their names.¹⁶⁷ However, there developed in late antiquity the use of the "monogram," a complex sign made up of the letters of a person's name. Stories told of the contemporary rulers Theoderic the Great (d. 526) and Justin I (d. 527) show them having to use a stencil to sign documents, supposedly because of illiteracy. These are perhaps maliciously misleading, since a monogram was an exceptionally complex thing to draw correctly, and the use of a stencil was perhaps not unusual.¹⁶⁸ Indeed, monograms are to be closely associated with seals, since most individuals are unlikely to have attempted to draw their monograms, but rather employed them as devices upon their seals, as numerous surviving examples attest, although none is known to be imperial.¹⁶⁹ However, one monogrammed amethyst seal-ring has been attributed precisely to Theoderic the Great.¹⁷⁰

In the light of this, it is worth noting here that two other late antique seal-rings, with explicit legends rather than monograms, have been attributed to other Germanic successor kings (Childeric I of the Franks [d. 481],¹⁷¹ Alaric II of the Visigoths [d. 507]; Fig. 7.6¹⁷²); but, even if correctly assigned, it is unknown whether these were intended for chancery use or, if so, would have followed imperial administrative practices. Visigothic laws do talk of the royal seal attached to



FIGURE 7.6. Seal of Alaric II, king of the Visigoths (484–507). Sapphire intaglio with the retrograde inscription *ALARICVS REX GOTHORVM*, set in a gold ring of the 16th century. Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Antikensammlung inv. no. VIIb 23. Photo © Geneva Kornbluth. Used with permission.

authenticate documents, but this may rather follow Roman private practice.¹⁷³ Also from late antiquity there survive a very few Sasanian royal seals (most famously that depicting Vahram IV [r. 388–399]),¹⁷⁴ but there are no documents, and written accounts of the use of seals by the kings of Persia are from the Islamic period.¹⁷⁵ Certainly seals were vital to Persian public and private documentary practice, but it is not clear if royal usage was divergent, and in any case the habits of the kings of kings might not provide useful comparanda for the emperors.¹⁷⁶

Finally, some copies of letters contain stray additional notes, usually publication orders (“let it be posted up”), not part of the letter proper, which may in some cases have been written by the emperor.¹⁷⁷

2.2.3 Multiple Versions of Letters

When Trajan replied to Pliny, this mostly generated only a single letter, although sometimes Trajan had to write to others as well as part of a particular problem.¹⁷⁸ However, the widespread promulgation of Empire-wide legislation

in the later Empire creates a different situation. Although the emperor may have subscribed a “law” in consistory, this did not create a single unchangeable text. In practice, laws had to be disseminated to a wide range of officeholders. At the least this meant, for letters, personalizing the forms of address to suit each recipient. Further, the content might need to be customized to suit the region or office. The law might also be sent out in both epistolary and edictal forms.¹⁷⁹ Therefore, working from the officially approved base-text, a range of near-identical but differentiated texts had to be generated. This is sometimes clear in our surviving evidence, where we possess more than one part of the output from this process.¹⁸⁰ For instance, Sirmondian 6 (425) is addressed to the praetorian prefect of Gaul, but extracts of what is the same law survive in the Theodosian Code addressed variously to the urban prefect (at Rome) and the *comes rei privatae* (Count of the Privy Purse).¹⁸¹ Texts to those of such high rank must surely have required the emperor to subscribe each one. Further down the hierarchy, the duties of circulation were mostly carried out by the praetorian prefects.

3 THE LETTERS’ PHYSICAL FORM AND ISSUES OF AUTHENTICITY

Given the lack of surviving originals, information about the physical form of imperial letters is limited. Letters on papyrus (the ancient equivalent to paper, which was not used in the Mediterranean until the early medieval period) probably differed little from private letters, generally written in columns on sheets of papyrus glued together, scrolling from right to left (the format of the original Theodosius II letter), although a single column top to bottom (*transversa charta*) would also be possible.¹⁸² In private correspondence the single-sheet letter was seen as preferable, brevity being a virtue.¹⁸³ At least some imperial documents were written on small wooden *codices*, called *codicilli* (hinged booklets), with an interior waxed writing surface, which are commonly associated with letters of appointment to office, although they need not be confined to these, since they represent a typically Roman documentary and epistolary form.¹⁸⁴ Letters could also be written in ink directly on thin wooden sheets (as in the famous Vindolanda tablets).¹⁸⁵ The illustrations in the *Notitia Dignitatum* associated with those officials concerned with documents show a variety of formats, including both rolls and *codicilli*, although there is no indication as to which formats matched which types of document (Fig. 7.7).¹⁸⁶ Overall, we simply do not know the balance between papyrus and wood in the letters sent out, and whether this changed over time or with the emperor’s location. Further, the physical format of letters received is unlikely to have influenced the format chosen for reply, except that subscriptions could be added directly to a petition. Expensive parchment is unlikely to have been used to any great extent for routine correspondence (as

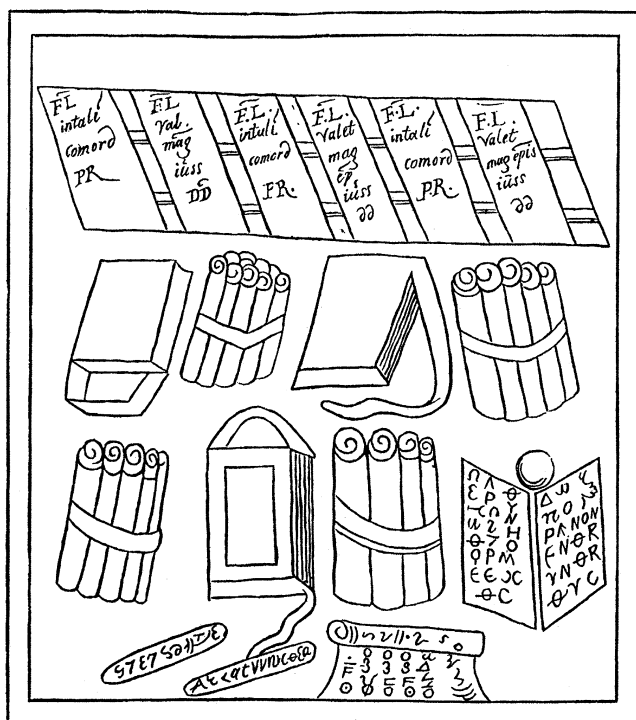


FIGURE 7.7. The insignia for the western *magistri scriniorum* in the *Notitia Dignitatum*. Drawing reproduced from Seeck 1876: 161.

opposed to, say, for literary or legal works), especially since Egypt, the source of papyrus, remained part of the Empire until the early 7th century.

As we have seen, the use of the imperial seal for either authenticity or security is not attested after the 2nd century. However, since *codicilli* at least were supposed to have matching inner and outer texts (*CTh* VI.22.1), this would make no sense unless the former was intended to act as an untamperable control upon the latter. Private *tabulae* from Italy show that two tablets (diptychs), with the inner writing on the wax, the outer on the wood, would be tied by string, across which in a special groove were attached the seals of witnesses, which came to be protected by a third tablet (making a triptych).¹⁸⁷ It is likely, therefore, that codicils of office and other important documents of appointment or privilege were sealed by members of the *consilium* or others around the court, which we certainly find with authenticated copies. Diocletian states that it is the imperial subscription that truly makes a document “authentic and original” (*CJ* I.23.3), as is clear from the discussion about subscription, sealing, and monograms (section 2.2.2). This is separate from the issue of security in initial transit. It may well be, therefore, that sealing shut of not only wooden but also papyrus letters was so usual and universal that it seldom merited notice in our sources.

When addressees did not receive originals either subscribed or sealed, they could take authenticated copies. Thus, on the Tabula Banasitana, the citizenship letters copied from the imperial *commentarii* were authenticated by numerous high-ranking witnesses of those around the court.¹⁸⁸ With private rescripts, which were posted up publicly in batches, the text could be copied down and again authenticity guaranteed by witnesses.¹⁸⁹

Despite the attempts at control, including restrictions upon the use of types of script and purple ink (see sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2), forgery of documents must have been a problem.¹⁹⁰ But a more urgent worry was the acquisition of genuine codicils or rescripts through bribery or collusion (*CTh* VI.22.1), or their otherwise improper issue within the administration.¹⁹¹ The famous petition of Flavius Abinnaeus to Constantius II in 341 was precisely for a situation where he and another man both had possession of formal codicils for the same post.¹⁹²

From the other end of the correspondence, Pliny describes his own seal to Trajan (a four-horse chariot), which would seem to imply that he may not have routinely used this seal for his correspondence to the emperor (*Letters* X.74), although an individual should have had only one seal.¹⁹³ This may, however, be a literary conceit. Even cities seem to have used a civic seal when communicating with the emperor.¹⁹⁴ In a notorious case under Constantius II, a private letter of the *magister militum* Silvanus was surreptitiously obtained and the text cleaned off, leaving only his subscription, being overwritten with treasonous correspondence, which was then presented to the emperor as evidence.¹⁹⁵ Although the clumsy forgery was soon recognized, the damage was done and a fearful Silvanus driven to rebellion.¹⁹⁶ In this case, the subscription was key for the deception, and forging or tampering with seals played no part.

Letters often came with attachments, even if these do not themselves always survive. Thus we find Pliny forwarding the following: a memorandum from Apamea (*Letters* X.47), decisions of earlier proconsuls (*Letters* X.56), letters from an accuser and defendant plus copies of relevant letters of earlier emperors (*Letters* X.58–59),¹⁹⁷ a letter from a litigant (*Letters* X.81), a petition from Amisus (*Letters* X.92),¹⁹⁸ and part of the *Lex Pompeia* for the province (*Letters* X.114). Trajan in turn encloses copies of letters when he writes back to Pliny (*Letters* X.22). It was also common for letters to be equipped as needed with detailed supplementary information, referred to as a *brevis* or *notitia* (Greek: γνῶσις). The tariff list accompanying the Prices Edict (301) is perhaps the most famous example, although not appended to a letter, but numerous others that accompany letters either survive or are attested.¹⁹⁹ Thus, after the reconquest of Africa from the Vandals, Justinian's letters to those charged with restoring the administration contain still extant *notitiae* exhaustively detailing staff and salaries (*CJ* I.27.1–2; April 534).²⁰⁰ In all these various cases, however, it is not always clear when attachments or supplements are additional text copied into a document, a pre-existing document glued on, or something entirely separate and not necessarily

even in the same physical format.²⁰¹ For instance, in the sole authentic imperial original, a copy of the petition under the heading *exemplum precum* is integral to the document, not a glued-on addition.²⁰²

4 CHOICE OF LANGUAGE: LATIN OR GREEK?

The official language of the Roman emperor's pronouncements, as indeed of Roman law itself,²⁰³ was of course Latin. However, since Rome had become deeply hellenized in the later Republic and had acquired extensive territories where Greek was the language of at least the élite and the medium of governance, this meant that the eastern portion of the Empire was, administratively speaking, bilingual from the outset. Letters in Greek (generally from eastern cities) would usually be answered in Greek, and the emperor had a special official in charge of Greek correspondence (section 2.1.2). However, petitions, at least from ordinary subjects, would usually be answered in Latin irrespective of the language of the petition.²⁰⁴ Because of the manner of survival, however, which means that many imperial texts of all genres are preserved in Greek sources, it can sometimes be difficult to know whether a particular text had originally been issued in Latin, and, if it had, whether it was translated into Greek immediately or some time later, and whether this was done officially or unofficially, although a source may helpfully indicate this.²⁰⁵ Sometimes we have texts in both languages, and although deciding the status of the Greek is still difficult, at least there is a Latin original to check—for instance, the letter of Valerian to Apellas at Smyrna (258)²⁰⁶ or the rescript of Theodosius II to Eudoxius, Count of the Sacred Largesses, based on his *suggestio* (428).²⁰⁷ In one of the more unusual examples, the Latin version of Justinian's Novels, called the *Authenticum* in the medieval period because it was considered the official Justinianic collection, is in fact derived from an interlinear word-for-word Greek-to-Latin crib used in the Constantinople law school in the 6th century.²⁰⁸ The fact that a translation may not be official does not mean it cannot become the effective version that is used.

Translation also raises the issue that Latin terms, in particular, can be treated very differently, varying between the use of parallel or equivalent Greek terms, which may become standardized,²⁰⁹ and transliterations, which latter become especially common in the later Empire as Roman law comes to be taught and practised almost entirely in Greek.²¹⁰

Official correspondence at the higher levels, however, especially between the emperor and imperial officials, was always in Latin.²¹¹ With the permanent residence of emperors in eastern cities from the later 3rd century, there was some impetus to extend the reach of official Latin in the East, with lengthy edicts and letters issued and even publicly displayed in Latin.²¹² Even so, the local governors sometimes accompanied these with translations or at least explanatory edicts in Greek, as occurred in relation to the Prices Edict.²¹³ This was relatively short-lived,

and the tendency was for Greek to percolate up the eastern administrative hierarchy. Unsurprisingly, the Panopolis archive shows internal administrative documents in the Thebaid entirely in Greek, as will have long been the case.²¹⁴ When the lawyer Theophanes traveled on official business from Hermopolis in the Thebaid to Antioch in Syria around 320, all his documentation was in Greek, except for two letters of recommendation in Latin, significantly addressed to the governors through whose provinces he was due to travel.²¹⁵ The upward spread of Greek was accelerated by the rise of the church and the extensive involvement of the imperial government in ecclesiastical and theological matters largely debated in Greek.²¹⁶ Even in the 5th century, however, official communications within the higher administration remained in Latin, with Greek used when addressing Greek-speaking subjects, including clerics.²¹⁷ It was only in the 530s that the praetorian prefect John the Cappadocian ordered all official material in the eastern prefecture to be in Greek.²¹⁸ The emperor's pronouncements were also increasingly in Greek, except to the now reduced and peripheral Latin-speaking areas (parts of the Balkans; then Africa and Italy from the 530s, as some western territories lost in the 5th century were recovered). Although there is a considerable amount of Greek in the Justinian Code, little of it dates from before the late 5th century, and it never predominates, except perhaps in some titles concerned with ecclesiastical affairs. Indeed, as late as 533, it was felt necessary to explain in the *Institutes* that an important law on inheritance had been issued in Greek to make it more accessible.²¹⁹ After the Code (534), however, the emperor generally legislated and communicated in Greek,²²⁰ and the use of official Latin became attenuated and largely disappeared by the 7th century.²²¹

5 THE DELIVERY AND RECEIPT OF STATE LETTERS

Private rescripts answering petitions may have been posted up publicly wherever the emperor was staying, while letters to cities were probably most often carried back by the embassies that had had audience with the emperor. But official correspondence had to be sent and received, as Aelius Aristides's picture of government demands.

5.1 The Public Post System (*cursus publicus*)

It was Augustus, the first emperor, who set up the public post (Suetonius, *Div. Aug.* 49.3.), known earlier as the *vehiculatio*, later as the *cursus publicus*.²²² After a brief experiment with relays of messengers, he soon settled on a system that was to remain standard throughout the imperial period, whereby the messenger traveled the whole way, changing mounts or carriages as he went. This had the important advantage that such messengers could themselves be questioned and provide additional information and context for understanding the written communication. The new system was used not only by messengers but also by others

on official business, and was thus designed to cope not only with speeding couriers but also with entourages and baggage. However, a user had to have a permit, which described his specific entitlement and had an expiry date.²²³ The *cursus* was organized with numerous way stations (*mansiones* and *mutationes*) maintained by a permanent staff to provide changes in mounts and pack animals (horses, mules, and oxen), carters with their wagons, or even overnight accommodation. The adjacent communities were responsible for keeping the *cursus* supplied with animals, carters, wagons, and even guides. Although initially payment was made for these services, by the late Empire it had become a form of local taxation. This heavy burden was made worse by two things. The first was the improper use or corrupt acquisition of travel permits (*evectiones* or *diplomata*), as we noted from Julian's complaint (*CTh* VIII.5.12; section 2.2.2). This can also be seen in the exchange of letters between a careful Pliny and an equally careful Trajan (itself a good example of the nature of their correspondence):

C. Pliny to Emperor Trajan. Regarding permits beyond their expiry date, lord, I ask that you write and free me from doubt, as to whether you wish them to be honored at all and for how long. For I fear lest one way or another I should stumble in ignorance and either confirm illegal acts or impede necessary ones.

Trajan to Pliny. Permits beyond their expiry date must not be in use. Therefore among the first things I enjoin upon myself is to send new permits throughout all the provinces before they can be needed.²²⁴

Second, there are ad hoc and unofficial and indeed illegal demands made by officials, soldiers, and so forth for animals or board and lodging.²²⁵ These are not unconnected phenomena, since the limitation in the number of permits meant that not all messengers or officials were deemed to require the speed and convenience of the *cursus* to carry out their duties. Thus it was Pliny's own decision to use up one of his passes to hasten the onward journey to Italy of a messenger from king Sauromates of the Bosphorus.²²⁶

Initially the messengers were either members of the emperor's *familia* (slaves and freedmen) or soldiers, although anyone sent on missions by the emperor might additionally carry letters. However, specialized corps within the imperial service soon developed, called *tabellarii* or *cursores*, while in the later Empire these duties are associated with the *agentes in rebus*.²²⁷ There seems to have been a grading of importance with messages, as an express service, the *cursus velox*, could be used for especially urgent business. By contrast, where the importance or urgency of the matter was not great, messengers or other agents might not be granted permits to use the *cursus* at all. Indeed, it should be noted that the messengers were not themselves part of the *cursus publicus*, which denotes rather the infrastructure and those who maintained it, distinct from those, who might use it.

One complicating factor is that we do not know the etiquette for the carrying of replies, and what effect this had upon choice of messengers. Do you trust another's messenger to carry back your reply safely, even if it is sealed, supposing they wait to take it? This may have mattered more when officials were using messengers from their own households. Soldiers and civil servants (technically also soldiers, in the civil *militia*), took an oath to the emperor and so may have been more fungible letter carriers.²²⁸ Two high-ranking emissaries sent with letters from Anastasius in Constantinople to the pope and the Senate in Rome brought back the replies, although the pope also had his own emissaries involved in these communications.²²⁹

The *cursus* was primarily a land-based system, with its main resources concentrated along the major highways of the Empire. It did sometimes include provision for water transport, as up the Nile or across the Adriatic, but this was far from universal.²³⁰ However, just as with travelers who lacked permits, so presumably, where there was no provision, messengers must have had to make their own arrangements.

Actual receipt of imperial missives was not a casual event in the later Empire. Just as the emperor came to be treated with studied ceremony, particularly by performance of *adoratio* or *proskynesis*, so his letters were treated likewise by their recipients. For instance, the proconsul of Africa told Constantine of how he had "received and adored the celestial letter of your majesty" in his reply (313).²³¹

5.2 Distance and Decision Making

The existence of the *cursus publicus* will have made the delivery of letters faster than it otherwise would be. However, there is no doubt that the often considerable time lag between the writing and receipt of documents is a key feature of how government functioned. Scholars have written much about travel times, for instance assessing the time it took for imperial accessions to be reflected in Egyptian documents.²³² More pertinent are the "dual dated" imperial constitutions in the codes and Novels (mostly 4th/5th centuries). These record the date of issue as well as date of receipt or posting in public. There are numerous problems with the transmission of the dates and some rather anomalous cases, but nonetheless, these give a flavor of transmission times. To pick just a couple of examples:²³³

- *CTh* VII.22.1: Sirmio (Lake Garda) to Rhegium, 60 days (February to April)
- *Frag. Vat.* 35 (*FIRA*² II, 471): Aquileia to Alba, 20 days (August to September)
- *CTh* IX.40.1: Trier to Hadrumetum (Sousse), 165 days (November to April)
- *CTh* VIII.10.1: Trier to Carthage, 99 days (November to February)
- *CTh* XI.29.1: Trier to Rhegium, 41 days (December to February)

Overseas journeys seem longer. However, the longer time from Trier to Hadrumetum than from Trier to Carthage may seem hard to understand, until we realize that journeys undertaken in winter, during the closed sailing season,²³⁴ were likely to encounter more widely differing traveling conditions, as witness the story of Petronius discussed later in this section. Time of year matters.

One-way promulgation of measures, therefore, might not be speedy, and exchanges of letters even less so, with governors awaiting answers to queries. One problem was the fact that emperors, especially in the 3rd and 4th centuries, and to a lesser extent governors were often on the move, which added a degree of uncertainty for a messenger trying to locate them. Second, it is seldom clear whether a messenger bringing a message would necessarily be expected to wait to take back a reply (see section 5.1).

The effects of this upon the workings of government are not always easy to appreciate. Although it might be thought that this would engender freedom of maneuver for officials, who might have to respond quickly to circumstances as they developed, in practice constant referral upward, consultations, appeals, and so forth meant that government was slow. In legal cases, time limits for appeals could be lengthy and disputes protracted.²³⁵ Officials often procrastinated, avoiding making potentially troublesome decisions themselves, or else delaying their replies or referrals, hoping perhaps to have left office first.²³⁶ Julian, writing to the vicar of Rome, set 30 days as the time limit for full documentation regarding appeals lodged against the vicar's sentences to be dispatched to the imperial court, on pain of his staff being fined ten pounds of gold (no small sum).²³⁷ One governor on the Lower Danube reputedly told a foreign delegation that they would have to wait four months to get an answer from the emperor, although their request for a subsidy was perhaps not considered urgent.²³⁸ In answer to a query, Trajan asked Pliny to send him a copy of a senatorial decree to study prior to making a decision, which would mean two round journeys between Bithynia and Italy before the matter could be settled (*Letters* X.72–73). In one rare case, however, we can follow a two-way correspondence, admittedly over a relatively short distance. In the papal election crisis following the death of Pope Zosimus at the end of 418, the urban prefect Symmachus (nephew of the prefect of 384) wrote from Rome to the emperor at Ravenna on 29 December; the reply to him was dated 3 January 419, upon which he acted and then replied on 8 January.²³⁹

Three well-known examples should suffice to give an idea of the effect of distance upon decision making. First, in 359 the general Ursicinus was recalled to court from the eastern frontier. En route to the emperor Constantius II (residing at Sirmium, near the Danube frontier), he received a further message sending him back to the East. He consulted with his council before deciding to obey the newest orders.²⁴⁰ The problem, of course, was that it was not clear to him what the distant court knew, making decisions about the eastern frontier and sending

instructions to someone who had just come from there. Ursicinus's hesitation is a *locus classicus* for the dilemmas of officials distant from the court. In fact, it is likely that fresh information about trouble in the East had reached the court, superseding the political maneuvering that had caused Ursicinus's recall and making his reappointment (if at a lower rank) a necessity. Indeed, such information may have reached the court at speed, bypassing Ursicinus's slower-traveling entourage, so that the emperor's latest decision was probably based on information that was not only sufficiently current but even more recent than that available to Ursicinus.²⁴¹ Nonetheless, this episode does raise the problem of time lag and the difficulties that could arise for an official receiving instructions based on possibly out-of-date information.

The second example is early imperial. In 40, the emperor Gaius ordered the installation of a statue of himself as Jupiter in the temple at Jerusalem.²⁴² Petronius, governor of Syria, who had been ordered to carry this out, became aware of strong local opposition and tried to stall. He wrote to the emperor advising against the action, although refusing to allow the Jews to send a delegation, fearing this would make things worse. In the meantime, Herod Agrippa arrived in Rome unaware of the issue, but when he found out, he persuaded the emperor against the measure either by letter or by oral request during a banquet. With his mind now changed, therefore, Gaius wrote to Petronius to cancel the project. It was only at this point, according to Josephus, that Petronius's letter arrived, and the apparent insubordination (of both governor and provincials) enraged the emperor. Although he did not revive the project, he did write back to Petronius ordering him to commit suicide. However, this letter was delayed by storms and arrived 27 days after a later messenger had brought news of Gaius's assassination (January 41). This part of the story is sometimes regarded with suspicion as rather too *ben trovato*, an illustration of a lucky escape from a tyrant's whims. Nonetheless, the whole affair shows how, as events unfolded at differential rates in Italy and Syria, and with the significant time lag for letters being sent between the two (particularly in winter), these letters could cross one another in opposite directions, or even leap-frog in the same direction and so have unintended consequences.

The final example comes again from Pliny in Bithynia (*Letters* X.63, 64, 67). Lycormas, an imperial freedman, writes to Pliny asking that he detain any delegations going to Rome from Sauromates, king of the Cimmerian Bosphorus, until he himself should arrive. A messenger turns up, whom Pliny detains until he receives a letter from the king stressing urgency,²⁴³ after which he gives the messenger a permit to use the post and speed him on his way to Rome. Then the delegation from the king arrives. Since Lycormas has still not come, and Pliny needs to move on to another part of his province, he lets the delegation set off for Rome. This is a complex set of communications, in which Pliny has to make a series of judgments about the relative importance and urgency of the requests put to him,

hampered by the fact that Lycormas never appears. One wonders whether it was the king's messenger who carried Pliny's sealed letter to the emperor using the *cursus*, or if Pliny would only have trusted one of his own staff.

Therefore, although there were many other factors affecting when, if, or how officials took decisions (see section 1.4), the physical constraints of long-distance communication were an important complicating factor.

5.3 *Secrecy and Publication*

Ancient commentators on the nature of the Principate highlight the secretive or at least opaque nature of decision making, in contrast to the previous open debate in Senate or assembly.²⁴⁴ Certainly some imperial business was specifically confidential. Tiberius is said to have written certain letters with his own hand to ensure secrecy.²⁴⁵ We may also suppose some matters were deliberately not committed to writing, being left for private explanation by the emperor's emissary. One account describes how in 472 the emperor Leo sent from Constantinople to his colleague Anthemius in Rome an *agens in rebus*, Modestus, carrying a secret letter, which was discovered when the latter was frisked at the city gates on the orders of the *magister militum*, Ricimer, who thus intercepted instructions for his own death.²⁴⁶ Ricimer instead had Anthemius killed. It is not stated whether Modestus knew the contents of the letter and so could have delivered oral clarification instead, but it was fatal for such an explicitly written message to fall into the wrong hands.

In general, however, the documents issued in the emperor's name were not intrinsically secret, but rather public acts. Of course, our evidence by its very nature contains mostly texts that were intended to be public. Indeed, many documents were put on public display by the emperor himself, most notably private rescripts, which were not usually sent to the recipients. Rather, they were posted up wherever the emperor happened to be, to be copied down by anyone interested, although the addressees might wish for authenticated copies (discussed in section 3). This public posting was a frequent occurrence, so much so that we can sometimes even reconstruct the itinerary of an emperor on the move, as with Diocletian's journey from Sirmium to Nicomedia in the autumn of 294.²⁴⁷ Even for letters, which were of course intended for specific recipients, there was clearly little problem with Pliny or Fronto or Symmachus (or their literary executors) including letters to or from emperors in their collected correspondence,²⁴⁸ and such were not necessarily selected or redacted with more self-censorship than their other letters, although that might be considerable.²⁴⁹ Nonetheless, if not intrinsically "secret," not all letters received by governors would necessarily be made public. Pliny was under no compulsion to make publicly known the contents of Trajan's answers to his queries. However, he was himself clearly very interested to find earlier imperial rulings to help settle various issues (*Letters* X.58, 65), and he also saw that Trajan's answers to him could serve to provide

precedents (*Letters* X.29). Even so, it is important to remember that many of the surviving imperial texts were addressed to governors or even private persons for specific individual cases and would have been known to few beyond the governor or others immediately involved. Thus, when Antoninus Pius wrote to the proconsul of Baetica about the case of an abusive slave owner, this can hardly have been known to many at the time. Yet by being included in Ulpian's handbook for proconsuls (*De officio proconsulis*) it will in due course have achieved wide circulation and precedential force.²⁵⁰

Anything that counted as "general legislation," however, would most likely arrive in the form of a letter to the governor, or at least with a covering letter to the governor, and would contain explicit instructions for dissemination or display, with the imperial text placed before the governor's or prefect's own publishing edict.²⁵¹ The emperors frequently state that they wish a measure, usually characterized as a universal benefit, to come to everyone's notice. For instance, Valentinian III (r. 425–455), writing to the praetorian prefect Albinus, ends as follows:

Moreover, Your Magnitude by posting edicts throughout the provinces shall cause to come to the knowledge of all this law, which will profit the welfare and harmony of the human race.²⁵²

Sometimes instructions are for publication in a permanent medium (e.g. on bronze; see section 1.1), but more usually this would involve wooden tablets or papyrus. The persecution edict posted up at Nicomedia on 24 February 303 was easily ripped up by a soon-to-be martyr.²⁵³ These documents were intended to be legible from ground level,²⁵⁴ and there might additionally be a public reading of a document's contents.²⁵⁵ It is quite clear from the proceedings of church councils and indeed of other bodies (the Senate, court hearings) that extremely long documents would be read out in full (i.e. not simply notionally "read" into the record). Documents would be displayed in a prominent place in the capital of a province or other important cities (e.g. Trajan's Forum in Rome),²⁵⁶ or in military camps. For instance, Licinius's letter on military privileges was issued from Serdica in June 311 as a series of letters to officials, probably military commanders.²⁵⁷ Each letter was personally subscribed by the emperor to an individual recipient (Dalmatius, Tertius), but they were otherwise identical. Permanent publication in military camps is ordered, and the two copies we possess come from the Danube fortresses of Brigetio and Durostorum. The fate of the Brigetio tablet is usefully illustrative of the life of a published document (Fig. 7.8). Originally published on bronze, thus permanently enshrining the soldiers' and veterans' privileges, it lacked details of the issuing emperor(s), headed in a large script only by the title "copy of the sacred letters," although with the emperor's subscription to the addressee marked out by the phrase *et manu divina*. After the overthrow of Maximinus (summer 313), his name was erased from the consular date,

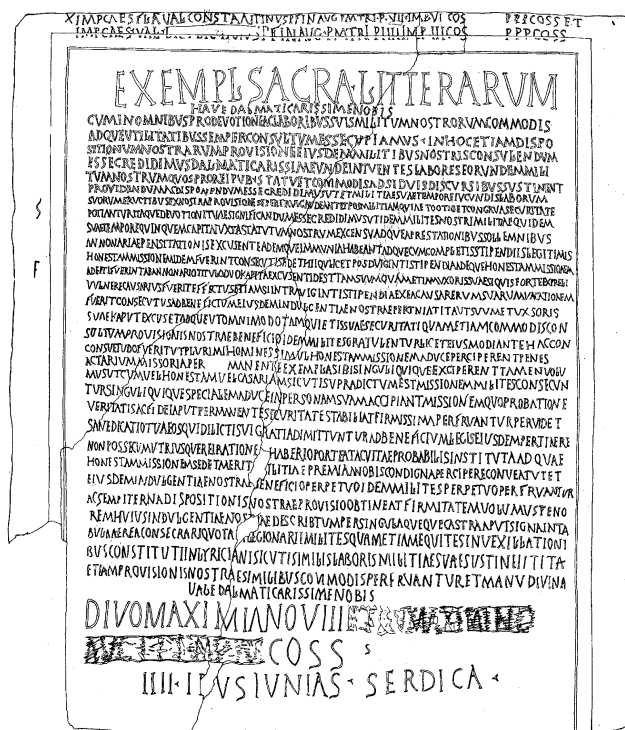


FIGURE 7.8. *The Brigetio Tablet. Drawing reproduced from Paulovics 1936: pl. III.*

rather visible since this was also in larger letters. Perhaps at the same time the document was given a new heading, untidily inscribed over the molding, naming the emperors Constantine and Licinius, emphasizing the current legitimate imperial college. Later again, either when Brigetio came under the direct rule of Constantine in 316 or after the final fall of Licinius in 324, the name of Licinius was itself erased. The document remained on display and valid, although the individual emperor who had issued the document was now a non-person.²⁵⁸

The extent of promulgation around a province or other region depended on the keenness of the governor. It appears that the expensive and permanent inscription of various measures, especially in the early 4th century, must be a function of this local choice. It is notable that the Prices Edict (301) was inscribed in Achaea and Phrygia-Caria, whereas the Caesariani Dossier (305) was inscribed in Achaea and Asia. The difference is surely that of the local governor's interest; indeed, Achaea may have had the same governor, as in both cases the imperial Latin texts are rendered in Greek (section 4).²⁵⁹ For the earlier Empire, however, the typically surviving letter, epigraphically speaking, is one addressed to a city or other community, whose public display is solely the choice of the recipient. For this reason, for instance, negative letters, which refuse requested privileges, are

not commonly preserved and, when they do survive, are displayed by rival communities whose privileges are thereby highlighted.²⁶⁰ While there was undoubtedly an ideology that expected imperial beneficence, this is a salutary reminder that emperors could not always write what a recipient wished to hear and would wish to publicize.²⁶¹

IN CONCLUSION

Aelius Aristides may have exaggerated the degree of micromanagement that the emperor could reasonably have performed. But I hope I have demonstrated that correspondence was a vital feature of the empire's government. Developing from the normal epistolary practices of Roman aristocrats, whether in or out of office, the emperor remained personally involved with his correspondence to a remarkable degree, even with matters of small overall significance, and at least subscribed all letters sent out in his name. Yet he came to have a considerable staff and set of bureaucratic procedures to assist with the production of documents, so that his degree of personal involvement might become attenuated, but never entirely nominal. There also existed the infrastructure of the *cursus publicus* to help convey letters hither and thither and to bind center and periphery, although inevitably there were delays and mishaps, and the distances involved had a significant impact upon the decisions and acts of both emperors and governors. While letters might routinely be addressed to individual officeholders, imperial letters and other documents became powerfully totemic. It was not simply that the emperor might urge the public display of his letters and edicts to the population at large, but that so many of the copies we know were not generated by the "state correspondence" process at all. In particular, the relationship of city and emperor, with embassies approaching the emperor in person and taking away a letter of privilege and then inscribing it in permanent form, was important in tying provincial communities into the imperial system. Even ordinary persons, who would usually rely on local systems to further or protect their interests, could still imagine approaching the emperor and gaining a benefit. Thus very rapidly the emperor's letters and other documents became a potent tool of interest to more than just their original recipients or addressees, and many of them came to enjoy a long and varied afterlife.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. The noticeable upsurge in academic interest in ancient letters and epistolography more generally is certainly linked to the fact that our own times are frequently dubbed The Age of Communications and that the letter form is at the core of the most popular digital communication systems, be they email, SMS, blogs or tweets. Four recent volumes on ancient letters have grown out of conferences held at Lyon (2004), Manchester (2004), Rome (2008) and Vienna (2010), respectively. The contributions in *La lettre d'archive: communication administrative et personnelle dans l'antiquité proche-orientale et égyptienne*, edited by Laure Pantalacci (Lyon 2008), discuss private and state correspondences of the Ancient Near East and Egypt from the 19th century BC to the 8th century AD, with a particular emphasis on archival practice. Markedly different in its geographical focus but more importantly in the choice of its key themes is the volume *Ancient letters: classical and late antique epistolography*, edited by Ruth Morello & A.D. Morrison (Oxford 2007) whose contributors explore private and official letters in Greek and Latin by focusing on epistolary traditions, the interaction between author and reader in epistolary works and the rhetorical, literary and intellectual advantages of choosing the letter form. Closer in geographical scope to the present volume, and sharing the focus on state correspondences, are the collections *The Letter: Law, State, Society and the Epistolary Format in the Ancient World*, edited by Uri Yiftach-Firanko (Wiesbaden 2013) and *Official Epistolography and the Language(s) of Power*, edited by Lucian Reinfandt and Sven Tost (Vienna 2013) whose contributions deal with predominantly legal and formal aspects of the letter traditions of the Mediterranean world and the Middle East from c. 2000 BC to Late Antiquity and the early Islamic period, respectively.

CHAPTER 1: NEW KINGDOM EGYPT

1. This chapter was written as part of the research funded by the Czech Science Foundation as the project GA ČR P401/12/G168 “History and Interpretation of the Bible.”

2. The literature on New Kingdom administration is rich; see especially Helck 1958; 1975; van den Boorn 1988; Lorton 1991; 1995; Bryan 2006 and the very good overview of Haring 2010.
3. The standard editions of the letters are Knudtzon 1915 (according to whose sequence the letters are quoted as EA XXX) and Rainey 1978². Recommended translations are Moran 1987 (French), Moran 1992 (English), Liverani 1998–99 (Italian).
4. For the dates see Beckerath 1997.
5. Plus some uninscribed tablets: Ash. 1893.1–41 (429); BM 134867; BM 134869. EA 382 is a collective number for all small fragments that cannot be joined to other tablets kept in the collection of the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin.
6. This number results from the assumption that (a) EA 235 + 327 and EA 56 + 361 represent each a single message and (b) EA 340 represents a fragment of a letter; see Izre'el 1997.
7. In addition to the letters, the Amarna corpus includes a small group of school texts relating primarily to the education of scribes: syllabaries, vocabularies, lexical texts, writing exercises and literary compositions, see Izre'el 1997.
8. O'Connor 1983: 204–18. See also Helck 1958.
9. Habachi 1981a; 1981b; Morkot 1987; 1991; 1995; Gasse & Rondot 2003; Davies 2005.
10. Moran 1992: xxvi–xxvii; Mynářová 2012a; Schloen 2001: 313–16.
11. E.g., *rabiṣu* (MAŠKIM) “commissioner,” *rabiṣ šarri* (MAŠKIM LUGAL) “commissioner of the king” or *rabû* (LÚ.GAL) “magnate.”
12. Hess 1993.
13. Davies 1908b: 7–15, 25–28, 31–32, pls. XI–XXI; Sandman 1938: 70–87; Hari 1976: 312A; Murnane 1995: 187–98; Galán 1995: 118–24.
14. For Amarna onomastics in general: Hari 1976, for the Amarna tombs: Davies 1903–1908.
15. Griffith 1894: 32–34, pls. XXII–XXV; Gunn 1923: 164–68, pls. LXIII–LXIV; Fairman 1933: 103–108, pls. LVII–LVIII; Fairman & Černý 1951: 151–80; pls. LXXXIV–XCVIII; Leahy 1985: 65–109; Lines 2002: 20–21.
16. Davies 1908b.
17. Hari 1976: 312A. Cf. also fn. 13.
18. Goren, Finkelstein & Na'aman 2002: 200.
19. EA 158, EA 164, EA 167. The second part of EA 169, probably sent by Aziru's son, is also addressed to Tutu.
20. EA 156–157, EA 159–161, EA 165.
21. Edition: Griffith 1898: 91–92, pl. XXXVIII; Löhr 1975: 142–44; Wente 1980; 1990: 28–29; Murnane 1995: 50–51.
22. Now in the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology at University College London: UC 32782–32783.
23. Morkot 1990: 325; for the title and function of the Great Steward of Memphis see Raven 2009: 160–61.
24. EA 99, EA 162–163, EA 190, EA 367, EA 369–370; cf. Moran 1992: xxvii–xxviii.
25. Kemp 2012.
26. For the edition: Davies 1908a; Murnane & van Siclen 1993; cf. Murnane 1995: 73–86. For the identification of Stela H: Fenwick 2006: 52.
27. EA 11, EA 23, EA 27 and EA 254; discussed in Mynářová 2011.

28. For the chronology of the Amarna letters see Campbell 1964; Kühne 1973; Moran 1992: xxxiv–xxxix; Liverani 1998–1999: 47–48; for the much disputed chronology of the northern regions see Miller 2007, Cordani 2011 (with further references) and the overview of the Egyptian-Hittite synchronisms and chronology by Devecchi & Miller 2011.
29. Despite being conventionally included in the collection as EA 333, the letter addressed by the Levantine ruler Paapu to what may be an Egyptian official was actually excavated in 1891 at Tell el-Hesi (ancient Lachish) in modern-day Israel by an expedition of the Palestinian Exploration Fund led by F.J. Bliss (1898²): Peiser 1899; Horowitz, Oshima & Sanders 2006: 92–94.
30. Kemp & Garfi 1993: sheet 5.
31. Mynářová, forthcoming.
32. Mynářová 2007: 13.
33. For an overview of the individual collections see Knudtzon 1915: 4–15; Moran 1992: xiii–xv; Mynářová 2007: 13–33.
34. EA 7 (= VAT 150) was destroyed during the Second World War and EA 128 (= VAT 1873) has been registered as a missing object since 1963.
35. Ash. 1893.1–41 (413) and Ash. 1893.1–41 (421) represent two joins of the same tablet (EA 352 + EA 353), see Izre'el 1997: 37–38.
36. EA 260 is missing.
37. Now in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford; first publication: Sayce 1894. The majority of these texts were uncovered in a building that is identified in Petrie's publication as "block of chambers no. 19," which he was certain to be the place where the first Amarna tablets had been excavated (Petrie 1894: 23–24); this would seem to correspond to the Records Office. One more fragment was found in the vicinity of "block of chambers no. 21." The latter corresponds to Q 42.22, immediately to the west of Q 42.21, the Records Office (Fig. 1.4).
38. Now in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo as J. 48396 (SR 4/12223/0) = EA 359 and J.48397 (SR 4/12224/0) = EA 379. First publication: Schroeder 1915: no. 193 and no. 190, respectively.
39. Now in the British Museum. First publications: Smith & Gadd 1925, Gordon 1934, Gordon 1947.
40. Izre'el 1997.
41. Cf. Moran 1992: xxvi, fn. 68: "The term *vassal* is used loosely of any ruler subordinate to the Egyptian king, whether or not he was bound by oath and a vassal in the strict sense." A useful brief summary of the contents of the vassals' correspondence can be found in Cohen & Westbrook 2000: 8–9.
42. Including EA 340.
43. EA 67: 13, EA 74: 42, EA 148: 37, EA 149: 60.
44. Moran 1992: xviii–xxii; Kossmann 1994; Tropper & Vita 2010; Izre'el 2012. Note, however, Von Dassow 2004 who argues for a case of alloglottography, that "the hybrid of Canaanite and Akkadian in which Canaanite scribes wrote was not a language of any kind, but an artifact of these scribes' use of cuneiform, and furthermore, that the language underlying their communication in cuneiform was not Akkadian but Canaanite" (p. 642).
45. Numerous examples in the international and the state correspondence, including EA 65, 182, 191–92, 216, 221, 225, 242, 255, 267–68, 273–74, 301–303, 319, 322, 325–26.

46. The only sealed document is a passport issued by the king of Mittani and addressed to “the kings of Canaan”: EA 30 (BME 29841), discussed by Porada 1974–77: 132–42. Cf. the similar documents used in the Achaemenid period (Elamite *halmi*), see Kuhrt, this volume.
47. E.g. in Dur-Katlimmu (modern Tell Sheikh Hamad in Northeast Syria): Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996: 51–52. This practice continued into the first millennium, see Radner, this volume.
48. Shaffer 1970: 113, pl. 24; Horowitz, Oshima & Sanders 2006: 51–53, 226.
49. Goren, Finkelstein & Na’aman 2004: 319.
50. EA 91–92, EA 103: Goren, Finkelstein & Na’aman 2004: 144, 147–48.
51. EA 290: Goren, Finkelstein & Na’aman 2004: 267–68.
52. EA 324–325: Goren, Finkelstein & Na’aman 2004: 295–96.
53. EA 217; Goren, Finkelstein & Na’aman 2004: 310.
54. Goren, Finkelstein & Na’aman 2004: 23–28.
55. Discussed by Moran 1992: xvii, xxvii–xxviii.
56. The introductions of the Amarna letters are discussed in detail in Mynářová 2007; see also the summary in Mynářová 2005.
57. The letters from Ugarit use a unique combination of elements typical for both international correspondence (= extended greetings) and the state letters (= prostration formula), that corresponds well to the hybrid status of this kingdom: more than a vassal but less than an equal: Mynářová 2006; van Soldt 2010.
58. EA 62, 71, 73, 77, 82, 86–87, 93, 95, 102, 145, 158, 164, 170, 178, 238, 256, 333; a further three letters can be identified as belonging to this group, but their introduction is (mostly) lost: EA 70, EA 169, EA 210. This group of texts is discussed in Mynářová 2012a.
59. EA 99, EA 162–163, EA 190, EA 367, EA 369–370. EA 163 and EA 190 are so badly damaged that little can be said about their introduction or indeed their overall structure.
60. Hieratic *3n.tw nk sš pn n dd hn’ dd*, usually translated as: “This letter is sent to you, to the following effect”; discussed by Moran 1992: xxvii–xxviii with n. 75. The distinctive formula is also used in two Akkadian letters of Egyptian origin excavated in Kumidi (modern Kamid el-Loz in Lebanon): KL 69: 277, l. 3–4 (= Kumidi 1) and KL 69: 279, l. 3–5 (= Kumidi 2). Edition: Edzard 1970: 55–62; figs. 10/1, 10/2, 12, 13/1. Cf. Hachmann 2012 for the archaeological and chronological context.
61. Mynářová 2007: 115–24.
62. Mynářová, forthcoming.
63. For the position of Amarna-Akkadian, see especially Müller 2010: 25–34.
64. The only named scribe, Kidin-Adad, appears in an international letter, the message of a Babylonian princess (EA 12: 23).
65. EA 286: 61; EA 287: 64; EA 288: 62; EA 289: 47.
66. Hari 1976; Mynářová 2007: 96–98.
67. First identified by Albright (1946: 8, 20–21) as the cuneiform rendering of an Egyptian title first attested in the reign of Amenhotep II (r. c. 1427–1397 BC), for references see most recently Mynářová 2007: 94–95. Suggested translations: Helck 1962: 478 n. 6: “letter writer” (“Briefschreiber”); Schulman 1964: 60 n. 73: “court archivist”; Cochavi-Rainey 1997: 104–105: “epistolary secretary”; van der Toorn 2000: 101: “letter writer, secretary.”

68. Moran 1992: 348, with reference to EA 286: 13.
69. Goren, Finkelstein & Na'aman 2004: 30.
70. Goren, Finkelstein & Na'aman 2002: 202; Goren, Finkelstein & Na'aman 2004: 134–61, 166–69, 226–31, 243–46, 262–69, 279–86.
71. Goren, Finkelstein & Na'aman 2002: 202; Goren, Finkelstein & Na'aman 2004: 161–64, 233–39, 265–79.
72. Goren, Finkelstein & Na'aman 2002: 202; Goren, Finkelstein & Na'aman 2004: 322–25.
73. Goren, Finkelstein & Na'aman 2002: 202; Goren, Finkelstein & Na'aman 2004: 323–25.
74. Mynářová 2012b.
75. Cf. Hane, an Egyptian interpreter to Mittani (EA 21: 24), and Mihuni, an Egyptian interpreter to Babylonia (EA 11: 6–16).
76. Holmes 1975; Tarawneh 2011.
77. Some letters are addressed to the client kings or members of their retinue while present at the Egyptian court: good examples are EA 97 and EA 170 (containing two messages, one to Aziru and the other one to the members of his retinue).
78. Goren, Finkelstein & Na'aman 2004: 29.
79. Mynářová 2011: 123–25. The dates and other details may have been added in cases when the king was not present in the city at the time when the message arrived: Hagen 2011.
80. Thus EA 151: 25–34.

CHAPTER 2: THE HITTITE WORLD

1. The following abbreviations are used in this chapter: ABoT 1 = Balkan 1948; ABoT 2 = Akdoğan & Soysal 2011; CHD = *The Hittite Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (eds. H. G. Güterbock, H. A. Hoffner et al., Chicago 1980–); CTH = Laroche 1971; HKM = Alp 1991a; KBo = *Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi*, Leipzig and Berlin 1923–; KUB = *Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi*, Berlin 1921–; SAA 5 = Lanfranchi & Parpola 1990; VBoT = Goetze 1930; VS 28 = Jakob-Rost 1997.
2. Ullmann 2010: 170, 258, 281.
3. Schachner 2011.
4. In Ankuwa: KBo 4.4 ii 56, iv 55; KBo 5.8 ii 7 (Goetze 1933: 130, 140, 152); in Katapa: KUB 19.37 ii 37–38 (Goetze 1933: 170); in Marassantiya: KBo 16.17 iii 23; in Arzawa (i.e. the West): KBo 3.4 iii 38 (Goetze 1933: 27).
5. HKM 17: 9–12 (Hoffner 2009: 124); KBo 18.79: 28–31 (Hoffner 2009: 335); KBo 18.35 (Hagenbuchner 1989b: 166–167; Marizza 2009: 136–137).
6. Glatz & Matthews 2009: 56.
7. Müller-Karpe 1998: 109–112. On routes to the east see Ökse 2007.
8. Gander 2010.
9. Garstang & Gurney 1959; but see Gurney 1992; Hawkins 1998: 22. Further literature: Marizza 2009: 60 fn. 2.
10. Hawkins 1998: 22.
11. Heinhold-Krahmer 1977.
12. Niemeier 2008.
13. Summary of the debate concerning the identity of the Ahhiyawa: Fischer 2010.
14. For Wilusa see Hawkins 1998; skeptical: Heinhold-Krahmer 2004.

15. Philologists, proceeding largely from stages in the development of the cuneiform script at Hattusa, sometimes distinguish between an Old Kingdom (c. 1650–1500 BC), a Middle Kingdom (c. 1500–1350 BC) and a New Kingdom, or Empire period (c.1350–1200 BC). But while a rough dating of Hittite tablets is possible according to these palaeographic criteria—Old Script (late 16th to 15th century), Middle Script (late 15th to early 14th century), New Script (late 14th century to early 13th century), Late New Script (second half of 13th century)—these may not necessarily correspond to politically relevant periods.
16. Glatz 2009.
17. Woolley 1955: 166–171, fig. 59; Yener 2008: 176, 180; Akar 2013. For the hegemonic position of Alalah in the administration of the Amuq and northern Orontes region during the 13th century BC see Archi & Venturi 2012: 24–26, 54.
18. Rieken 2006.
19. See Edel (1994; in German) for an edition of the Hittite correspondence with Egypt and Mora & Giorgieri (2004; in Italian) for the correspondence with Assyria.
20. Information courtesy Ortaköy's excavator, A. Süel. See also Süel 2001; 2010: 820–823; Ünal 1998: 17–45; Hoffner 2009: 252–262.
21. Salvini 1994; Hoffner 2009: 75–80.
22. KBo 1.11 (edition: Beckman 1995b).
23. Klinger 1998: 372; Weeden 2011a: 75–76.
24. Goren, Mommsen & Klinger 2010: 694. The clay is there associated with “Upper Euphrates fabrics.”
25. van den Hout 2009.
26. Although KBo 31.40, which mentions Egypt, may belong to his reign (de Martino 2005: 292); perhaps also KBo 8.18 (de Martino 2005: 293–294; Hagenbuchner 1989b: 47–48).
27. The letter KBo 18.86 seems to touch on Arnuwanda I's dealings with a disloyal Central West Anatolian ally known from other texts as Madduwatta. Literature: Marizza 2009: 87. See KUB 14.1, Edition: Goetze 1928; Beckman 1999: 153–160.
28. E. Laroche classified CTH 171–185 as Royal Letters; added since: CTH 186–190.
29. Hoffner 2009: 43.
30. van den Hout 2007.
31. Schachner 2011: 181. The exact time of abandonment is not clear.
32. Letters: KBo 32.200, KBo 32.202 (Temple VIII); KBo 32.145 (Temple XII); KBo 32.140 (Temple XVIII).
33. Seeher 2001; Schachner 2011: 112–113.
34. Table 2.3 does not include the isolated finds from Building G (KBo 8.16), Building H (KBo 14.49) or Building N (KBo 9.78) on Büyükkale, which are, however, included in the summary total. For specifics, see the appendix to this chapter.
35. S. Košak, *Konkordanz der hethitischen Texte* (www.hethiter.net), accessed 02/01/2013. See further Košak 1995; Alaura 2001.
36. Hoffner 2009: 41–44.
37. Maximally 18 of the 70 tablets are written with Middle Hittite palaeography. KBo 18.76: reign of Suppiluliuma I (Hagenbuchner 1989b: 154). KBo 18.53: reign of Hattusili III, i.e., mid-13th century (Marizza 2009: 150). The date of KBo 18.54 is debated (reign of Tudhaliya III: Marizza 2009: 59–60; Suppiluliuma I or slightly earlier, i.e., mid-14th century: Hoffner 2009: 340, with further literature).

38. Güterbock 1971.
39. H.G. Güterbock (1971), when discussing a similar find context (excavated in 1933) with omen reports and letter fragments, concluded that the Hittites considered both to be ephemeral documents.
40. If the texts from the dump were originally part of the inventory of Building D, then 97 of the 691 fragments found there would be letters, a higher concentration of letters than in any other building on the Büyükkale citadel.
41. For evidence for such sorting procedures see Alaura 2001. Note, however, the presence of a large number of sealed bullae in Building D, which may be connected with the letters (see below, section 3.1).
42. A similar phrase “keep this tablet safe” also occurs in KUB 60.69 rev. 4', but most likely refers to safekeeping during a journey.
43. van den Hout 2005.
44. Although there is one exception: KBo 50.85 + KUB 8.79//KUB 26.92. This letter concerns events in Syria and may have been copied due to the significance of the accusations being made against the official Tattamaru who is reported to have destroyed a tablet of the king. That Tattamaru had fallen out of royal favour seems apparent from a letter postscript, possibly to a letter of the king, in which the queen berates him for his behaviour after the death of his wife, the queen's niece (KUB 23.85, Hagenbuchner 1989b: 15–16; Marizza 2009: 172–173; Hoffner 2009: 364–365).
45. Waal 2010: 82 n. 230 for a discussion of some letters that are not single-columned: e.g., KUB 23.101 and KBo 18.24, addressed to the king of Assur, could be drafts or archive copies. One might add KUB 21.40, perhaps part of the correspondence with Egypt concerning a marriage; KUB 23.93 which Hagenbuchner (1989b: 419) connected with the so-called Tawagalawa Letter (KUB 14.3), thus also part of the international correspondence (if it is a letter at all); KUB 23.97, apparently a letter between officials detailing an estrangement of some kind; KUB 19.16 (very broken); KUB 26.90, again international correspondence, but probably a practice tablet (see below, section 3.4).
46. Source: S. Košak, *Konkordanz der hethitischen Texte* (www.hethiter.net), accessed 17/01/2013.
47. The rich text finds from Ugarit, Hatti's client kingdom in northern Syria, include 74 letters between vassals, officials and the Hittite king written in Akkadian (see also Mynářová, this volume).
48. Hoffner 2009: 45 on the basis of the letters published in photograph in Alp 1991b; Waal 2010.
49. See above, section 2.3 with fn. 47, and below, section 3.6.
50. Goren, Mommsen & Klinger 2010 and cf. above, section 2.1 for the results on the analysis of the *Siege of Uršu* tablet.
51. Hoffner 2009: 46–47; van den Hout & Karasu 2010.
52. Hoffner 2009: 55, based on Hagenbuchner 1989a: 24 fn. 83. However, none of the Old Babylonian texts cited there refer to messengers transporting tablets.
53. KBo 18.48 obv. 17; Hagenbuchner 1989b: 32.
54. van den Hout & Karasu 2010.
55. Hagenbuchner 1989a: 34.
56. Güterbock 1942: 4.
57. For a reconstruction of such (leather) bags see Herbordt 2005: 38e.
58. Waal 2010: 39.

59. Written as Akkadographic *TUPPU*.
60. Note that W. Waal (presentation at the 8th International Congress of Hittitology, Warsaw, September 2011) argues that this is also a semi-logographic writing GUL-zattar and hides a Luwian word **kwanzattar*.
61. Payton 1991; Symington 1991. Writing boards were also widely used elsewhere in the ancient Near East. Actual examples have been recovered from several Neo-Assyrian sites, including one 8th century BC example from Kalhu (Nimrud) that still had wax and even cuneiform writing on it: Oates & Oates 2001: 92–93.
62. Herbordt 2005: 25 with fn. 141.
63. KBo 18.69; KBo 18.39; HKM 60: 4–6 (Alp 1991b: 233–234, 337; = fig. 2.2): “As for what I just wrote to you on a wooden tablet concerning the law-suit about Tarhun-miya’s house, pay attention (to the) house of Tarhunmiya, decide his law-suit, and treat him well!”
64. Waal 2011.
65. Weeden 2011a: 234–237.
66. But note that van den Hout 2010 argued that this designation means nothing more than “clerks” and that the reference to “wood” contained in their title refers in fact to a kind of box or container associated with the administration, the ^{GIS}*tuppa*-.
67. Bittel 1938; Akdoğan & Hawkins 2010.
68. Akkadograms were used as allograms in Hittite-language texts to denote Hittite words, as were Sumerograms (which were also used as logograms in Akkadian-language texts in Mesopotamia).
69. VBoT 2. Yakubovich 2010: 103–106.
70. van den Hout 2006; Rieken 2006; Yakubovich 2010.
71. KBo 8.17; KBo 29.38 (edition: Starke 1985: 368–369).
72. Even if one of them has the appearance of a mock-Akkadian name: *Na-bu-u-na-ša-ar* KBo 8.17 obv. 9'. His colleague Mār-Šerua has a proper Akkadian name, attested also for an official connected with the Hittite administration at Emar in Syria (Hagenbuchner 1989b: 166).
73. Alp 1998; Beckman 1983; Beckman 1995a; Hoffner 2009.
74. Note the physician Rabâ-ša-Marduk who is attested at Babylon, Assur and Hattusa: Heeßel 2009. Further the scribe Kidin-Gula at Emar: Cohen 2004.
75. KBo 28.82, from Building C on Büyükkale in Hattusa, is an Akkadian letter to Hittite officials, most likely concerning border issues in the Kašiyari mountains (modern Tır Abdin on the border between Turkey and Syria). This letter has been assumed to come from Assyria (Güterbock 1942). The only other two letter fragments in Akkadian that could possibly belong to the correspondence of Hittite officials are written in what would seem to be Boğazköy ductus, i.e. are likely to have been written by scribes trained in Hattusa: KBo 28.99 (from Temple I in Hattusa) and KBo 28.89 (Building E on Büyükkale).
76. HKM 72: 36; Alp 1991b: 258–259; discussed by Singer 2008: 259; Weeden 2011b: 127. *Pabilā'u* is a rare use of the Akkadian ethnic adjective “Babylonian” for the more usual Hittite *pabilili*.
77. *arha pessiet*, literally “he threw away.” This could be an idiom meaning “rejected” (CHD P 320 3b), in that the messenger refused to take the tablet in the first place. Singer (2008: 258) translates “declined”; However, it is explicitly stated that he had “taken the tablet off to my lord.” Other translations build on the meanings listed under

- CHD P 321 4c: “discarded/disregarded” (Hoffner 2009: 342); “I’ha ignorata” (Marizza 2009: 61). Finally “du hast gering geachtet” (Hagenbuchner 1989b: 58) refers to the king’s alleged reaction to the tablet.
78. van den Hout 2005; Weeden 2011b.
 79. Herbordt 2005: 98.
 80. Hagenbuchner 1989a; Hoffner 2009: 56–61.
 81. KBo 18.4 (Hagenbuchner 1989b: 181–2; Hoffner 2009: 331; Marizza 2009: 159).
 82. Süel 1995: 276.
 83. Beckman 1995a: 24.
 84. Marizza 2009: 172.
 85. KBo 8.23, possibly sent just before the disastrous Hittite defeat at the battle of Nihriya (Singer 1985: 116–117; Marizza 2009: 175).
 86. KBo 18.57 (Hagenbuchner 1989b: 102–104).
 87. KuT 50 (Wilhelm 1998: 181–187; KuT = excavation number: “Kuşaklı-Texte”).
 88. KUB 31.101 (listed under CTH 581 = omen reports; Hagenbuchner 1989b: 37–40; Marizza 2009: 111–112).
 89. KBo 18.69, as argued by Marizza 2009: 51–52.
 90. KBo 9.82; Hoffner 2009: 350–352; Marizza 2009: 185–187; Singer 2008: 716–718. Contra Hoffner, Singer doubts that the recipient can be the Hittite king.
 91. KUB 3.56; Hagenbuchner 1989b: 379–381.
 92. These piggy-back letters are frequently treated separately in publications of Hittite letters, as they are essentially separate compositions: thus Hagenbuchner 1989b and Hoffner 2009, but not Marizza 2009. In the statistics given in Table 3, no attempt has been made to separate out the postscripts.
 93. KUB 31.101 rev. 36’–39’, to the scribe associated with the augurs addressed in the main letter.
 94. KBo 18.6. For photographs illustrating the two different handwritings see www.heth-iter.net: PhotArch B1187b (inventory number of the Boğazköy text photo archive in Mainz).
 95. van den Hout 2003; Weeden 2011b: 124–126.
 96. E.g., KBo 15.28: ^{PN}NU.GIS KIRI₆ writing to his sons about his house.
 97. Weeden 2011b: 124.
 98. KBo 1.5 iv 32–39; Hoffner 2009: 52; Beckman 1999: 24.
 99. For Pazzu see also KBo 18.14; Hoffner 2009: 88–89.
 100. HKM 21: 16–26 (= fig. 2.3): Sanda reads out the tablets that were sent by the addressee of the main letter, Pulli, but also represents his interests. Discussed by Alp 1991b: 91; Hoffner 2009: 134.
 101. Pecchioli Daddi 1982 is the standard reference collection of Hittite professional titles and their attestations in the texts; this indispensable work needs updating.
 102. Derived from Hittite *haluga*- “message,” with the professional suffix *-talla*-. Usually written with Akkadographic LÚ ṬE₄-MI, see Weeden 2011a: 357.
 103. KBo 18.69.
 104. HKM 56: 13–19 (Hoffner 2009: 203). “Messenger” is written with Akkadographic LÚ ṬE₄-MU. The name Sanda is known from other Maşathöyük letters, although they are unlikely to all be the same person: Alp 1991b: 91; Hoffner 2009: 134.
 105. Hoffner 2009: 53.

106. We find a “runner” being instructed to “run” in a Kaska Treaty text: KUB 23.77 rev. 67, although it is unclear if the word “run” is to be understood literally.
107. KBo 5.11 i 5, 18. When a message comes to the palace gate the gatekeeper has to call out first in Hittite that there is a message and then in Hattic the title of the official the message is for. Hattic was the language of an earlier population of Central Anatolia. The text serves as a key for the gatekeeper to translate between the two. The officials mentioned are the cup-bearer, butler, cook, actor, lamentation singer, ¹⁰zilupuriyatalla-, ¹⁰akuttara-, tent-man, staff-bearer, ¹⁰GAD.TAR, courier, scout courier, ¹⁰duddushiyalla-. See also KUB 26.23 ii 17.
108. KBo 3.1 ii 8–9 (*Edict of Telipinu*); Hoffmann 1984: 26–27.
109. KUB 50.32 rev. iii 4; KBo 18.56 lower edge 14’ (Hagenbuchner 1989b: 101).
110. Hoffner 2009: 366. The term “scout courier” occurs in the list of officials that sleep at the palace in the *Instructions to the Gatekeeper* (see above, fn. 107) but in the letter VS 28.129 obv. 6, the word used is simply “scout.”
111. “The horses and the couriers come, [they² ...] in the garden of Asgasepa”: KUB 34.69 obv. 22’.
112. This is a peculiar format for a letter. Possibly it was a draft for an Akkadian translation which would have been written on the right (hence Hagenbuchner 1989b: 14: “Briefentwurf”). KUB 46.34, the only tablet with a similar format listed by Waal (2010: 62–64), is considered there to be possibly a practice tablet.
113. Similarly to Wandapaziti in KBo 18.54 discussed above, section 3.1.
114. Later in the text, in rev. 33’, Iyaliya reports back to the sender from the king.
115. Pecchioli Daddi 1977; Singer 1983; 1995.
116. KBo 18.4 (Hagenbuchner 1989b: 181–182; Hoffner 2009: 331; Marizza 2009: 159).
117. KUB 14.3 ii 58–61, 68–77. Pecchioli Daddi 1977: 176–177; Beal 1992: 161–162; Weeden 2011a: 255.
118. A fragmentary letter mentions that someone had sent three individuals on an errand (*haluki*) one after the other and gives their names, one of whom is ‘*pu-u-ta-ḫa*-[...]’ “the cup-bearer”: KBo 20.108 obv. 5’ (Hagenbuchner 1989b: 200). Only people well known in court circles would have been mentioned by name, indicating their high social standing.
119. Of the thirteen individuals whose seals bear the title “cup-bearer” (Hieroglyphic URCEUS), eight have additional seals indicating that they were scribes (Herbordt 2005: 392). The two titles never appear together on the same seal, to my knowledge, but are likely to have been shared by the same people.
120. An overview of the use of equids among the Hittites is given in van den Hout 2003–05 (with no mention of the existence of a courier service).
121. Hawkins *apud* Herbordt 2005: 296; Hoffner 2009: 10.
122. Hawkins *apud* Herbordt 2005: 296.
123. Argued thus by Hawkins & Morpurgo Davies 1998; Hawkins *apud* Herbordt 2005: 295–296; Taş & Weeden 2011: 58. There appear to have been different nouns for “mule” and “donkey” in the Luwian language of the Iron Age but it is unclear whether this was the case in Late Bronze Age Luwian, when at least one of the animals was called *tarkasna*-.
124. For discussion see Hawkins & Morpurgo Davies 1998: 254–255. Far less likely is a hinny, the offspring of a donkey dam and horse sire, which due to the difficulty

- presented by the foal's size in comparison to its mother, is rarely ever bred on purpose.
125. Jakob 2009: 62–68. There may be a connection to the *perdum* equid, almost certainly a mule, used for transporting high officials in the Middle Bronze Age according to Old Assyrian documents: Michel 2004.
 126. KBo 6.26 ii 38–41//KBo 9.71 + KUB 29.33 i 4–7; Hoffner 1995: 143, 222; van den Hout 2003–05: 485.
 127. KUB 13.35 + i 13–16 (of the queen), 32 (of the palace), 37 (of the queen), ii 5 (of the palace), iii 9, 11, 16, 27, iv 42, 46, 49, 50; Werner 1967: 4–20.
 128. KUB 13.35 i 17–34; Werner 1967: 4–5.
 129. KUB 13.35 i 33–34; Werner 1967: 4–5.
 130. Yalburt inscription, block 13 §4a: Poetto 1993: 62–64; Hawkins 1995: 81–82; Hawkins & Morpurgo Davies 2010: 110 n. 16. The literal translation of the text as presented at Hawkins and Morpurgo Davies (2010: 110 n. 16) would be (Block 13 + 3) “(There were) 4,100 *aliwanisa* to me, but (as for) mule(-related things) there were not,” meaning either that there were 4,100 enemy and countless mules/chariotry, or that Tudhaliya had 4,100 troops and no mules/chariotry at all. In contrast to this, Yakubovich 2008: 3 interprets L. 101/2 as a phonetic writing for the verb “to stand,” which is unlikely. Yakubovich 2008 suggested translating *aliwanisa* as “enemy,” which fits other attestations of the term better, but the Yalburt context seems to require a meaning that would also allow a more general translation as “troops.”
 131. Compare *Apology of Hattusili III* §7: “Eight hundred teams of horses were (there), whereas the troops were innumerable. My brother Muwatalli sent me and gave me one hundred and twenty teams of horses, but not even a single military man was with me” (Van den Hout 1997: 201).
 132. Herbordt 2005: 190, 274, plate 33 no. 425.
 133. Consequently Dinçol, Dinçol & Peker 2012: 195 transliterate the name (using a different convention than the one used in this chapter) as ASINUS₃-tā-la-a, likewise interpreting the sign form as depicting a mule and reading the name as Tarkasnatala, but linking it to the sign Laroche 1960: L.100 instead of Laroche 1960: L.101.
 134. SAA 5 200: 9’–11’; cf. Gallagher 1994: 60–61. In the Nimrud Wine Lists, the “man of the mule stable” receives a significant portion of wine, an indication of elevated status: Kinnier Wilson 1972: 54; Dalley & Postgate 1984: 268.
 135. See above, section 2.3 with n. 45.
 136. Translation as “sealed gifts (?)”: courtesy E. Rieken, personal communication.
 137. Pecchioli Daddi 2003: 70–71.
 138. Weeden 2011a: 260.
 139. The road identified by A. and M. Süel leading from a Hittite building at Ortaköy is paved along part of its course but this is likely a later, possibly Roman, development (presentation of İ.M. Ozulu and E. Reyhan at the 8th International Congress of Hittitology, Warsaw, September 2012). How the road would have looked in Hittite times is unclear. For more on Hittite roads see Ökse 2007.
 140. A variation on this theme stresses that the monuments are found on borders and nodes of heavy traffic and sees them as displays within regional and sociopolitical competitive networks (Glatz & Plourde 2011).
 141. Ullmann 2010.

142. Moreover, the Hittites are thought to have moved their capital four times during the imperial period. For a critical discussion of this phenomenon see Doğan-Alparslan & Alparslan 2011.
143. *Siege of Uršu*: Beckman 1995b; *Palace Chronicles*: Dardano 1997.

CHAPTER 3: THE NEO-ASSYRIAN EMPIRE

1. This chapter was written as part of the research project “Mechanisms of communication in an ancient empire: the correspondence between the king of Assyria and his magnates in the 8th century BC,” funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council from 2008 to 2013. The following abbreviations are used in this chapter: ABL = Harper 1892–1914; K = Museum number for a tablet from Kuyunjik, British Museum; SAA = *State Archives of Assyria*, Helsinki 1987—(also available online: <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/saao/>); SAA 1 = Parpola 1987; SAA 2 = Parpola & Watanabe 1988; SAA 5 = Lanfranchi & Parpola 1990; SAA 6 = Kwasman & Parpola 1991; SAA 10 = Parpola 1993; SAA 13 = Cole & Machinist 1998; SAA 15 = Fuchs & Parpola 2001; SAA 16 = Luukko & Van Buylaere 2002; SAA 17 = Dietrich 2003; SAA 18 = Reynolds 2003; SAA 19 = Luukko 2013a.
2. Relevant Neo-Babylonian documents are discussed in Jursa 1995.
3. Herodotus, *Histories*, V 52–54; VIII 98; Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, VIII 6.17–18.
4. On occasion letters in Babylonian language were recorded in Assyrian script. Such texts normally constitute messages by the Assyrian authorities to Babylonian recipients that were meant to be read out in public. See below, section 1.5.
5. Fadhil & Radner 1996: 420–21.
6. Radner 1997: 60–62.
7. Radner 1995: 71–72.
8. The known examples are listed in Fadhil & Radner 1996: 420 n. 2.
9. Radner 2008: 488–89, 508–509.
10. For a study of the introduction formulae used in the state letters see Luukko 2012.
11. For a discussion of its geographical location see Radner 2006a: 55 no. 34.
12. For the location see Radner 2006a: 47 no. 8.
13. As the analysis of the language and cuneiform sign repertoire shows: Parpola 1997; cf. also Luukko 2012: 103.
14. Zamazalová 2012: 323–25.
15. SAA 16 19; discussed in detail by Livingstone 2007: 105–107.
16. Livingstone 2007: 107, cf. the photo reproduced there.
17. For royal letters that were to be read out as public proclamations see below, section 1.5.
18. For similar postscripts in the Amarna correspondence see Mynářová, this volume.
19. Luukko 2007: 230–31.
20. Luukko 2013b.
21. Postgate 1974; 1980; Garelli 1989; Radner 2003: 886–87.
22. SAA 1 237.
23. SAA 1 6, 10, 19, 156.
24. E.g. SAA 1 29, 91; SAA 5 107, 186, 204; SAA 15 118.
25. Liverani 2004.
26. Radner 2006a: 508.

27. E.g. in the letter SAA 19 89: 16–21: “The king, my lord, knows that the lands of the vizier’s and the chief judge’s households do not cross the Radanu river (= modern Tainal and, further downstream, Adhaim). The King’s Road which goes to Azari is their border.” For a discussion of some references from legal documents from Dur-Katlimmu (modern Tell Sheikh Hamad) see Radner 2002: 3–4.
28. Addition in some exemplars: “as far as the Gate of the Gardens.”
29. At present, the Assyrian length measures cannot be converted into exact modern equivalents, as the available evidence is inconclusive and of limited metrological value. As Powell 1987–90: 476 stresses, especially the use in Assyrian royal inscription is problematic as Assyrian measures are used alongside the different Babylonian standards. If one assumes, as is feasible, that the large cubit mentioned here is c. 50 cm long (Powell 1987–90: 474–76), the width of the King’s Road inside Nineveh would be 26 metres.
30. Such as in the city of Nippur, see SAA 18 192.
31. E.g. Yavuz 1997.
32. This emerges most clearly from SAA 5 227; see below.
33. SAA 6 206.
34. Radner 1997: 248.
35. For comparative purposes, the local costs of pack animals recorded in the Kaffecho Zone of Ethiopia in 1994 may be instructive, with a mule costing twice the price of a horse and about six times the price of a donkey: mule = 1000–1400 Birr (= 159–222 US\$; 1 US\$ = 6.3 Birr); horse = 500–700 Birr (= 89–111 US\$); donkey = 150–250 Birr (= 24–40 US\$). Data from Howe & Garba 2004: 59.
36. As seems more likely, in my opinion: the “house of mules,” with its supervisor (*ša bēt kūdini*; attested in SAA 5 48; 79, 200 and the fragmentary references in SAA 15 229 [erroneously numbered “228” in edition]; 308; 332 and 376), may have been a dedicated breeding and training institution, although its nature remains unclear in the available sources; cf. the Seleukid stud farms connected to the royal post service (Bencivenni, this volume).
37. Jakob 2009 no. 24–26.
38. Cf. War Office 1937; United States Army Publication 1989; Orlean 2010.
39. For the location see Radner 2006a: 62 no. 57.
40. Cf. Kessler 1980: 235 map VIII—but delete the ghost town *Kanbisizu which is based on a reference that has since been correctly read Til-Barsip; Radner 2003/4: 100.
41. Not without serious technical and diplomatic challenges, see Shahvar 2007 and Winseck & Pike 2007: 31–42.
42. Kessler 1997: 136.
43. Sargon II: SAA 1 172 (discussed in the beginning of this section), SAA 1 177, SAA 5 227; Esarhaddon: SAA 10 361. The last three letters are discussed further below in this section.
44. For the location see Radner 2006a: 62–63 no. 61.
45. For the location see Radner 2006a: 45 no. 2.
46. Centred on the Shahrizor plain in the modern province of Sulaymaniyah: Radner 2006a: 51–52 no. 22. According to the reading suggested by Finkel & Reade 1998: 251, the titles of Aplaya, eponym of the year 768, on his stela from Assur are “governor of Mazamua, Arrakdi and Dur-Aššur,” indicating the two most important cities in the province.

47. For the difficulty of this route cf. Jwaideh 2006: 350–51 fn. 108.
48. SAA 5 229.
49. K 4675+; edition: Levine 1993.
50. Spelled Laggalagi in K 4675+.
51. Spelled Azri in K 4675+.
52. Radner 2008: 486–90.
53. The earliest references to the King's Road in Babylonia (Jursa 1995: 155) date to the reign of Sargon II, certainly the direct result of the efforts made to integrate the region into the Empire: under Sargon, Babylonia was for the first time structured into Assyrian administrative units, the short-lived provinces of Babylon and Gambulu (Radner 2006a: 64–65).
54. These letters will be published by Simo Parpola in a forthcoming volume of the *State Archives of Assyria* series. For the historical context see Frame 1992: 102–87.
55. *a-na* LÚ.TIN.TIR.MEŠ ERIM.MEŠ *ki-din-ni-ia um-ma* ^{PN}AN.ŠÁR—DÛ—A LUGAL KUR.Aš-šur.KI *pa-lih* [^dAMAR.UTU] DI-mu *a-a-ši a-na* É.GAL-ia [*u* KUR-ia] *lu-u* DI-mu *a-na ka-a-šú-nu* TUR.[MEŠ *u* GAL.MEŠ].
56. See the contributions of Bencivenni and Corcoran, this volume.
57. Discussed by Barjamovic 2004: 73–77.
58. Edited in Parpola 2004.
59. ABL 301 (dated) and K 2931 in 652 BC, ABL 571 in 650 BC.
60. *a-mat* LUGAL *a-na* LÚ.KUR.*tam-tim-a-a* LÚ.AB.BA.MEŠ *u* TUR.MEŠ ARAD.MEŠ.ía.
61. *a-mat* LUGAL *a-na* LÚ.KUR.*ra-šá-a-a* LÚ.AB.BA.MEŠ *u* šéh-ru-ú-ti. For the political context see Parpola 2007: 256.
62. *a-mat* LUGAL *a-na* LÚ.gam-bu-la-a-a LÚ.AB.BA.MEŠ *u* TUR.MEŠ.
63. *a-mat* LUGAL *a-na* ^{PNd}EN.[LÍL—*ba-n*]i ù LÚ.EN.[LÍL.KI.MEŠ LÚ.AB.BA].MEŠ ù TUR.MEŠ [ARAD.MEŠ-ia] *mál ba-šú-ú*.
64. *a-mat* LUGAL *a-na* ^{PNd}AG—[GÁL-ši] LÚ.UNUG.KI.MEŠ LÚ.[AB.BA.MEŠ] ù TUR.MEŠ ARAD.MEŠ-ia [*mál ba-šú-ú*].
65. *a-mat* LUGAL *a-na* ^{PN}NÍG.GUB LÚ.UNUG.KI.MEŠ LÚ.AB.BA.MEŠ ù TUR.MEŠ.
66. *a-mat* LUGAL *a-na* ^{PN}NÍG.GUB ù LÚ.UNUG.KI.MEŠ LÚ.AB.BA.MEŠ *u* TUR.ME[Š] ARAD.MEŠ-ía.
67. *a-mat* LUGAL *a-na* ^{PN}am-ba-ap-[pi] ù LÚ.KUR.ra-š[á]-a-a LÚ.AB.BA.MEŠ ù šéh-r[u]-ti.
68. Note e.g. SAA 18 1, ABL 301, ABL 571 and K 2931.
69. Slab 2 (now lost) of room 14 (slab 2): Botta & Flandin 1850: pl. 145; Albenda 1986: 92, 112, pl. 136. The accompanying inscription reads: “Pazzaši, a Mannean fortress, which is in front of the pass leading to the land of the Zikirtean (i.e. Mittati of Zikirtu).”
70. Lemaire 1998; Fales 2003.
71. Reade 1986; Reade 1998–2001: 424–27.
72. Publications: Dietrich 2003; Fuchs & Parpola 2001; Lanfranchi & Parpola 1990; Parpola 1987.
73. SAA 5 81; SAA 5 100.
74. Publication: Saggs 2001; Luukko 2013a.
75. Mallowan 1953: 33.
76. Parker 1961.
77. SAA 1 31, 33; SAA 5 64, 91; SAA 15 24, 184, 199; SAA 17 22.

78. Reade 1986: 220.
79. Reade 1998–2001: 425.
80. Discussed by Parpola 2002.
81. Reade 1998–2001: 425. Publications: Cole & Machinist 1998; Luukko & Van Buylaere 2002; Parpola 1993; Reynolds 2003 and forthcoming volumes in the *State Archives of Assyria* series by Grant Frame and Simo Parpola.
82. SAA 18 163, 187; not yet edited in the *State Archives of Assyria* series: ABL 469, 815, 1089, 1366.
83. Reade 1998–2001: 425: 1904–10–9, 42 = ABL 1385; not yet edited in the *State Archives of Assyria* series.
84. Friedrich et al. 1940: nos. 1–16.
85. Postgate 1973: 10–11, 21–23; cf. Fales 2012b: 128–32.
86. SAA 13 1 = Ass. 18609, see Pedersén 1986: 28: N1:149.
87. Edition: Parpola 2008: 86–95 no. 22.
88. Building 2 in excavation area G = R: Matney et al. 2011: 83–88, 108 fig. 12.
89. For the location see Radner 2006a: 49 no. 14.
90. Parpola assumes the treasurer to be an official of an assumed temple of Ištar at Tušhan (his suggested identification for Building 2, which the ground plan as recovered by the now completed excavations does not support), with the letter's author being another local, lower-ranking official. I find it more likely that the letter was written by the governor of Tušhan and addressed to the Treasurer of Assyria.
91. Mattila 2000: 165–66.
92. For a recent survey see e.g. Fales 2012a.
93. Streck 2001: 77.
94. Millard in Curtis, Collon & Green 1993: 35–36, with fig. 21–26.
95. Schachner 2007: pl. 5: individuals 23 and 24 on band V.
96. Cf. Russell 1991: 28–31, 292 n. 36 for a discussion and list of references.
97. The language that we today designate as Babylonian is always called “Akkadian” in contemporary texts, including the present one.
98. Other examples: SAA 17 1, 3–6 (Sargon II), SAA 18 1–5 (Esarhaddon).
99. Radner 2011: 389–90.
100. Aramaic was certainly used for the state correspondence of the succeeding Neo-Babylonian and Persian empires; see Kuhrt and Jursa, this volume.
101. Parpola 1981: 122–23.
102. Edition: e.g. Lindenberger 2003²: no. 1.
103. This assertion is based on my work with the Neo-Assyrian legal tablets from Dur-Katlimmu (modern Tell Sheikh Hamad) which frequently feature Aramaic labels, either incised or inscribed in ink (published by Wolfgang Röllig in Radner 2002). The ink labels proved to be very sensitive to air humidity and faded and often disappeared for good in the course of several months. They would not have survived any direct exposure to water.
104. SAA 16 99: 8-rev. 4: “The scribe Kabtī, a servant of Aššur-da”in-aplu son of Shalmaneser, who gave me the Aramaic letter which I gave to the king, my lord, is saying to me: ‘Regarding the offender about whom I spoke to the king, my lord, his son enters and leaves the Palace.’”
105. For a discussion of this title see Dubovský 2012.
106. Radner 2012: 254–55.

107. SAA 5 84–89, 91–92, 94, 98, 100.
108. SAA 5 96–97.
109. SAA 1 41, 43.
110. Radner 2006a: 49 no. 14.
111. Quoted in SAA 5 85 and 87.
112. Quoted in SAA 5 97.
113. For the locations of Našibina and Guzana see Radner 2006a: 52 no. 52 and 51 no. 20.
114. SAA 5 96.
115. SAA 1 29.
116. SAA 1 31.
117. 32 texts: SAA 1 1–28, SAA 5 277–281.
118. The Assyrian state letters have not yet seen petrographic analysis of the clay used for the tablets (cf. Mynářová, this volume), but such work would certainly promise some clarification here.
119. For the location see Radner 2006a: 56–57 no. 40.
120. Postgate 1992.
121. SAA 2 5 iii 6–14.
122. This letter is attributed to the delegate Aššur-rešuwa in the *State Archives of Assyria* edition but this is not certain. If so this could be the earlier letter referenced in Senacherib's report.
123. For the location see Radner 2006a: 56 no. 38.
124. The title *ša-qurbūti* "He who is close (to the king)" > "Royal Confidant" is discussed in Radner 2002: 13–14.

CHAPTER 4: THE BABYLONIAN EMPIRE

1. This chapter is based on research conducted in collaboration with Y. Levavi and R. Pirngruber under the auspices of a project entitled "Official Epistolography in Babylonia in the First Millennium BC," funded by the Austrian *Fonds zur Förderung der Wissenschaftlichen Forschung* (Vienna). The following abbreviations are used in this chapter: BIN 1 = Keiser 1917; BM = museum number of the British Museum; CT 22 = Thompson 1906; GC 2 = Dougherty 1933; SMUI = Museum number of the Spurlock Museum of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; TCL 9 = Contenau 1926; VS 6 = Ungnad 1908; YOS 3 = Clay 1919; YOS 6 = Dougherty 1920; YOS 19 = Beaulieu 2000; YOS 21 = Frahm & Jursa 2011.
2. More recent treatments of aspects of the empire's political history and its rule over Syria and the Levant and of its administrative structures include Vanderhooft 1999; 2003; Beaulieu 1989; 2002; 2006: 192–200; 2007; Kuhrt 1990b; Kleber 2008; Lipschits 2005; Lipschits & Blenkinsopp 2003; Schaudig 2001: 9–27; Da Riva 2008: 2–19; 2010a; 2010b; 2012; Jursa 2003; 2007b; 2010b.
3. Discussed in Jursa, forthcoming, on which the following brief sketch of the structure of the Babylonian state is based.
4. Beaulieu 2007: 142.
5. Frahm 2011: 360–61.
6. Da Riva 2010b: 179; 2012.

7. The subjected cities and states of the west did have at best an indirect representation within the framework of imperial power through the (occasional or regular) presence of vassal kings and governors at the royal court.
8. Zadok 2003: 484.
9. But see Beaulieu 2006: 194–97.
10. E.g., Frame 1992: 36–48.
11. First edition: Unger 1931: 284–85; see e.g. Vanderhooft 1999: 41–42, 93–99 and Beaulieu 2002: 99–101. The latest treatment of the list of officials can be found in Jursa 2010b: 78–91. A new edition by Rocío Da Riva, based on a collation of the original, is forthcoming in *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie*.
12. Brinkman 1984: 16.
13. Jursa 2006: 161; Jursa 2007a.
14. Verbrugghe & Wickersham 2001: 60; Beaulieu 2006: 196 with n. 34.
15. Beaulieu 2006: 200; Jursa, forthcoming.
16. Jursa 2012.
17. YOS 3, 19, as discussed in Jursa 2012: 380.
18. Da Riva 2008: 19–23.
19. This is discussed in Jursa, forthcoming. See e.g. Joannès 1997: 146; Kleber 2008: 141–54; Lipschits 2005; Vanderhooft 2003 (and other contributions in Lipschits & Blenkinsopp 2003).
20. For this concept, which is of Weberian inspiration (Weber 1980⁵: 606–12), see e.g. Blake 2011.
21. Discussed in detail by Wells, forthcoming and Jursa, forthcoming. Further Kleber 2008; Jursa 2011a; 2011b; Jursa & Hackl 2013. Much pertinent evidence comes from trial records and related documentation, on which see Holtz 2009; Sandowicz 2012; Magdalene, Wells & Wunsch, forthcoming.
22. E.g., Rollinger 2008.
23. Verbrugghe & Wickersham 2001.
24. E.g., Vanderhooft 1999.
25. Jursa 2005.
26. Jursa 2010a.
27. An archive of ration lists found in Nebuchadnezzar's palace in Babylon throws light on the internal administration of the palace and gives information on a number of other details of state administration, but overall its scope is quite limited: Pedersén 2005: 111–27; Jursa 2010b: 69–78.
28. Catalogued in Da Riva 2008; cf. discussions and editions in Da Riva 2010a, 2010b, 2012.
29. Of these 1,100 letters, c. 220 texts are currently unpublished. For the published material see Hackl 2007: 4–7.
30. For a general description of the letter corpus see Frahm & Jursa 2011: 1–19; Jursa & Hackl 2013. Ebeling 1930–34 and 1949 contain editions of all letters published up to then: perhaps three quarters of the corpus. These editions, while still useful, can frequently be improved on and should be used with caution.
31. The letter TCL 9 99 can be dated to 610 BC (Kleber 2008: 31 n. 125, 338), YOS 3 1 to c. 607 BC (Kleber 2008: 337 with n. 919).
32. Meissner 1908: 157–59.
33. Beaulieu 2006.

34. Jursa 2012.
35. E.g., TCL 9 119 (discussed below).
36. See also BIN 1 22 and BIN 1 72. Like many other details of Neo-Babylonian administrative practice, this is actually a calque on a Neo-Assyrian custom, for which see Radner 2008.
37. Radner 2008: 487–94 and Radner, in this volume.
38. Da Riva & Frahm 1999/2000: 156–58. See also Paulus 2008.
39. YOS 3 6.
40. BIN 1 72. The official's name may perhaps have to be read as Nabû-ban-ahi; on this man see Janković 2005: 170, 180–81.
41. YOS 21 156. This letter may have to be dated to the Persian period, the prosopographical data are not entirely conclusive.
42. Jursa 2003: 177–78; cf. Radner, this volume.
43. Jursa & Hackl 2013.
44. E.g., Frahm & Jursa 2011: 6–11.
45. For examples in German translation: Jursa 2006.
46. Note that Bel-šarru-ušur is here explicitly designated as *mār šarri* “crown prince” (literally “the king’s son”). Nabû-šarru-ušur reports on his correspondence with the crown prince in a letter to the governor of Uruk (TCL 9 132).
47. Sallaberger 1999; Jursa & Hackl 2013.
48. Kleber 2008: 336–41.
49. BM 118097, discussed below.
50. YOS 3 4.
51. The letter has to be dated to the late seventh or early sixth century on the basis of the tablet format and the script. The sender is more likely Nebuchadnezzar than Nabopolassar since the ‘bishop’ is addressed by name only, a familiarity of address which is more likely in the case of Nebuchadnezzar who had held the office himself for a brief period late in the seventh century. The text was read on the basis of the photo of the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative: <http://www.cdli.ucla.edu/dl/photo/P421360.jpg>. I am grateful to R. Pirngruber for pointing out this letter to me.
52. Referring to “an order sealed with the royal signet ring” concerning “an ox and three sheep.”
53. E.g., Janković 2005; Jursa 2010a: 661–81.
54. Jursa & Hackl 2013.
55. Such as BM 118097, discussed above.
56. E.g., Fuchs, forthcoming.
57. BIN 1 93.
58. GC 2 395; translation: Jursa 2006: 164–65.
59. Jursa 2010b: 91–94.
60. E.g. Kleber 2008: 61–66.
61. YOS 3 46.
62. BIN 1 22.
63. BIN 1 29; YOS 21 164.
64. YOS 3 21; TCL 9 89.
65. CT 22 3.
66. CT 22 46.
67. CT 22 62; CT 22 150.

68. BIN 1 72.

CHAPTER 5: THE PERSIAN EMPIRE

1. The following abbreviations are used in this chapter: [Arist.] *Oec.* = Pseudo-Aristotle, *Oeconomica*; Diod. = Diodorus Siculus; FGrH = Jacoby 1923–1958; Fort. = Siglum for unpublished or partially published Persepolis Fortification Tablets; Hdt. = Herodotus; *IG* = *Inscriptiones Graecae*; PF = Persepolis Fortification Tablet; PFa = Persepolis Fortification Tablet, published in Hallock 1978; Plut. *Artox.* = Plutarch, *Artoxerxes*; Plut. *Them.* = Plutarch, *Themistocles*; Polyaeus, *Strat.* = Polyaeus, *Stratagemata*; PT = Persepolis Treasury Tablet; *VH* = Aelian, *Varia Historia*; Xen. *Anab.* = Xenophon, *Anabasis*; Xen. *Cyrop.* = Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*; Xen. *Hell.* = Xenophon, *Hellenica*.
2. In order to avoid bibliographical prolixity, only the most significant and/or recent references are given in the introduction to this chapter. For full discussion, analysis and references on all aspects of the Achaemenid empire, see Briant 1996 [2002]; for many of the sources, with critical introduction, see Kuhrt 2007a.
3. Briant 1996: 26–28 [2002: 16–18].
4. Potts 1999: 259–308.
5. Lanfranchi et al. 2003; Kuhrt 2007a: 19–46.
6. On this, see in general Kuhrt 1995: 656–64; 2007a: 19–134; Briant 1996 [2002], chapters 1 and 2 as well as various chapters in J. Boardman et al., eds., *The Cambridge Ancient History IV: Persia, Greece and the Western Mediterranean, c.525 to 479 B.C.*, 2nd ed., Cambridge 1988.
7. Root 1979; Alvarez-Mon 2010; Alvarez-Mon & Garrison 2011; Henkelman 2003.
8. Briant 1996 [2002], chapter 3; Kuhrt 2007a: 135–77.
9. Briant 1996 [2002], chapters 4 and 13; Kuhrt 2007a: 181–309.
10. See in general Kuhrt 2007a: 6–15.
11. Bakker et al. 2002.
12. Briant 1996: 713–15 [2002: 696–97].
13. Lenfant 2004 is the best and most complete recent treatment; Llewellyn-Jones & Robson 2010 is rather more restricted (cf. Lenfant 2012), while the commentary volume to Stronk's edition (2010) has not yet appeared.
14. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah; in general, see Grabbe 2004.
15. Kuhrt 2007b.
16. Momigliano 1977.
17. Kent 1953²; Lecoq 1997; Schmitt 1991; 2000. In this chapter, Old Persian royal inscriptions are referred to in the standard form established by Kent 1953² (e.g., DB; XPL).
18. For the fragmentary administrative text in Old Persian found among the Persepolis Fortification tablets, see Stolper & Tavernier 2007.
19. Kuhrt 1988; Stolper 1994a.
20. E.g., Posener 1936; Chauveau 2008; Smith & Martin 2009; for the statue of Darius I see the contributions to *Cahiers de la Délégation Archéologique Française en Iran* 4 (1974).
21. Grelot 1972; Porten & Yardeni 1986–1994; Dušek 2007.
22. Cameron 1948; Hallock 1969; 1978.

23. In general, Kuhrt 2007a, ch. 16; Henkelman 2008a, ch. II; Briant, Henkelman & Stolper 2008; see also the Oriental Institute Chicago, Persepolis Fortification Archive Project for information and regular updates of work on the texts.
24. See, broadly, Greenfield 1985.
25. Naveh & Shaked 2012. For a discussion of their significance see already Briant 2009. Note also the many hundreds of Aramaic ostraca from Idumaea dating from Artaxerxes II (r. 405–359 BC) through to Alexander IV (r. 315/5–307/6 BC; possibly even Ptolemy I, r. 306–283 BC); see the general conspectus in Lemaire 2006.
26. See, in general, Briant & Boucharlat 2005.
27. Stronach 1978. See now also the results of the survey in the Tang-i Bulaghi Gorge: Adachi & Zeidi 2009; Asadi & Kaim 2009; Askari Chaverdi & Callieri 2009; Atai & Boucharlat 2009; Fazeli Nashli 2009; Helwing & Seyedin 2009.
28. Schmidt 1953–1970; Tilia 1972–1978. Note also the recent Iranian-Italian soundings at the site, see Callieri 2007 for the Hellenistic period and the online reports of the *Circle for Ancient Iranian Studies* (<http://www.cais-soas.com>).
29. Perrot 2010.
30. Dusinberre 2003.
31. Stern 1982; journal *Transeuphratène: recherches pluridisciplines sur un province de l'empire achéménide*.
32. The study of this region is beset by major methodological problems, see the still valuable critical discussion of Briant 1984.
33. See, in general, Wiesehöfer 1994 [1996], BIV; Kuhrt 1995: 689–701; 2007a, chapters 14–16; in full, Briant 1996 [2002], chapters 9–12.
34. Petit 1990: 181–86.
35. Stolper 1989.
36. Briant 2009.
37. Lemaire 2006.
38. Briant 1988.
39. Haerinck 1973; Vallat 1989.
40. For an exhaustive study of the functions of the satrap, see Klinkott 2005.
41. Briant 1982: 57–112
42. Henkelman 2005: 159–164; 2011.
43. Briant 1982: 113–179.
44. Dandamaev 1982; Miller 1997: 6–7.
45. Briant 1982: 181–234.
46. Barber 1991: 199–203.
47. Hdt. III 97; VII 69.
48. Hdt. III 97.
49. Knauss 2005.
50. Cf., e.g., Miller 1997.
51. Ctesias, FGrH 688 F14(45).
52. See the references to the Gulf islands as places of exile, Strabo XVI 3, 5; Hdt. VII 80; FGrH 688 F14 (43).
53. E.g., Diod. XVI 52; Hdt. IV 53; FGrH 688 F14(45).
54. Posener 1936: 1–87; statue of Darius I: articles in *Cahiers de la Délégation Archéologique Française en Iran* 4 (1974).
55. Kuhrt 1990a; Waerzeggers 2011.
56. Kuhrt & Sherwin-White 1987; Henkelman et al. 2011.

57. Waerzeggers 2003/4.
58. Dušek 2007: 508–607.
59. Betlyon 1980; Elayi 1989.
60. Herr 1992.
61. Lemaire 2006: 416–419.
62. Briant 1987.
63. The so-called “Great Satraps’ Revolt,” a series of disconnected and short-lived disturbances in Anatolia in the first half of the fourth century, seems to be primarily connected with internal rivalries among members of the Persian aristocracy, rather than real attempts at secession (Weiskopf 1989).
64. Hornblower 1982; Stolper 1987.
65. E.g., Hdt. V 21; Xen. *Hell.* IV 1.6–7; Mathiesen et al. 1995.
66. Hdt. VI 41.
67. Ctesias, FGrH 688 F15.
68. Briant 1998b; Kuhrt 2007a: 865–69 no. 36.
69. Briant 1985.
70. Stolper 1985; 1994b.
71. Stolper 1977.
72. Ebeling 1952; Briant 1996: 615–617 [2002: 597–599].
73. Briant 1996: 803–809 [2002: 783–800].
74. Briant 1996: 442–452 [2002: 429–439].
75. Briant 1985; Shaked 2004.
76. Xen. *Anab.* VII 8; Whitehead 1974; Stolper 1985; 1994b.
77. Kharga Oasis: Briant 2001; Wuttmann 2001. The same type of installation has been reported at a site in Bahriya Oasis: Wuttmann & Marchand 2005.
78. E.g., Diodorus XIX 21, 2–4.
79. Sumner 1986.
80. Briant 2009; Sherwin-White & Kuhrt 1993: 62.
81. Cf. Rollinger 2013.
82. Wilhelm 1986, discussing the inscription of Sarduri (esp. p. 106).
83. Elephantine (dating from the late fifth century): Porten & Yardeni 1986–1994: vol. 3, no. C2.1; Babylon: Seidl 1999.
84. Ezra 6.6–12 (Darius I to Tattenai, governor of Across the River); Thuc. I 129 (Xerxes to Pausanias); Meiggs & Lewis 1988²: no. 12, “Gadatas Letter” (for arguments against its genuineness, Briant 2003; in favour, Tuplin 2009); see further below, n. 179.
85. E.g., PT 4, PT 5.
86. The assumption that the kings were illiterate is not, of course, confirmed by the orality of the epigraphic formula (cf. Lewis 1994; Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1999); note the, admittedly late, classical anecdote (late second/early third century AD, Aelian *VH* XIV 14) about a Persian king perusing and writing on a wooden tablet, of the type used widely in the Near East covered with wax, see Briant 1992.
87. Hallock 1969; 1978; see above, section 1.4.
88. Kaptan 2002. Note also the recent find of four clay tags with Achaemenid-style seal impressions at Seyitömer Höyük in Phrygia (Central Anatolia): Kaptan 2010: 361–368.
89. B. Porten, personal communication, July 2011.
90. The original edition was by Driver 1956. For history of acquisition, and analysis, see Whitehead 1974, who also provides an edition; see most recently for facsimile,

- normalised script, Hebrew and English translation Porten & Yardeni 1986–1994: vol. 1, no. A6, 1–16 (adding two more). A new edition is being prepared by John Ma and Christopher Tuplin.
91. Shaked 2003; 2004; Naveh & Shaked 2012.
 92. The main English edition is Cowley 1923, the relevant ones being nos. 21, 27, 30 and 31; the original edition is Sachau 1911. To this must be added 16 papyri held in the Brooklyn Museum, published by Kraeling 1953. New, improved editions of all are in Porten & Yardeni 1986–1994, vols. 1–3.
 93. See in particular, Briant 1991.
 94. Hdt., V 52–54. The exact route is disputed. According to Herodotus the roughly 3,000 km took three months to traverse.
 95. [Arist.] *Oec.* 2.2.14b; Welles 1934: no. 18, 20.
 96. Henkelman 2008b.
 97. FGrH 688 F33.
 98. Elamite *halmi* or (Old Persian loanword) *miyatukkam* (cf. Latin *viaticum*), “sealed document.”
 99. A “handful” is, in fact, a precise measurement: 1 QA = c. 1 litre, used also for liquids.
 100. Note that, in contrast to the other documents in the dossier, which are folded horizontally and then sealed, this one is folded vertically. The difference is thought to relate to the fact that Nakhthor will have had to display it repeatedly in order to obtain his supplies.
 101. Whitehead 1974: 60–64.
 102. Note the handsome column base which was probably part of a pavilion connected to a way station: Mousavi 1989.
 103. Kuhrt 2007a: 737–739 no. 3, 743–745 no. 8, 745–746 no. 10.
 104. Xen., *Anab.* V 6, 10.
 105. Xen. *Cyrop.* VI 2, 36; Hdt. VII, 131.
 106. PFa 19; 30, ll. 8–10.
 107. Note that when Cyrus the Younger was advancing with his troops to challenge the king in 401 BC and trying to circumvent the main road, not only did he have to deal with serious problems of supply, but his chariots also sank into the soft mud (Xen. *Anab.* I 5, 4–8).
 108. Xen. *Anab.* III 31.
 109. Jursa 1995.
 110. Hdt. III 5, 3–7.1.
 111. Kuhrt 2007a: 748–751 no. 15 with fig. 15.5; cf. above, section 1.4 with n. 25.
 112. Posener 1936: no. 1.
 113. *IG II²* 141 = Tod 1948: no. 139.
 114. Cf., e.g., Plut., *Them.* 26, 5.
 115. Hdt. VII 239, 2–3; V, 35. One describes the exiled Spartan king Demaratus at the Persian court sending a message hidden under a waxed tablet, the other how the tyrant of Miletus, Histiaeus, tattooed his message on the shaved head of a slave, then waited for the hair to grow over it.
 116. Hdt. VIII 98; Xen. *Cyrop.* VIII 6, 17–18. What the speed actually was is not said. How & Wells (1912) in their commentary to the Herodotus passage, cite Marco Polo’s description of the Great Khan’s high speed relay post, whose men are said to cover an (incredible?) 200 or 250 miles a day.

117. E.g., PF 1335.
118. Briant 1996: 383; 791–792 [2002: 370; 776–777]. Note that one of the ways the rebellious governor Oroites (in the 510s BC) signalled his refusal to recognise Darius I's right to the throne was by having his royal messenger assassinated, which outrage spurred Darius to demand his execution (see further in section 3.5).
119. E.g., PF 1315.
120. E.g., PF 1672.
121. Briant 1999.
122. Azzoni 2008.
123. E.g., PF 1810.
124. One influential approach to the use of Elamite in Persepolis has been that of Gershevitch 1979, who argued that it was effectively at this date a dead language, a view that can no longer be maintained, see Tavernier 2008. For the suggestion that Darius I's Bisotun inscription was originally composed in Aramaic, see Borger 1982.
125. The text from the Treasury collection (PT 85) was argued by Cameron (*PTT*, 200–201) to have been written in Babylonia and thus not integral to the collection (see references contra in Kuhrt 2007a, ch. 14, no. 32, n. 1). The Akkadian text from the Fortification (Fort. 11786) is a slave sale agreed between two Babylonians, so does not fit with the concerns of archive (further Stolper 1984).
126. This is certainly true of the Greek and (recently identified) Old Persian text. The Phrygian is less clear, although it does contain an Old Persian month name, which is suggestive. A good introduction to the material is Lewis 1977; 1994; more up to date and very full, Henkelman 2008a, chapter II; briefer, Kuhrt 2007a, chapter 16.
127. Note, e.g., the two Elamite tablet fragments from Kandahar (Kuhrt, 2007a, ch. 16, no. 58 with references).
128. Aramaic: Segal 1983; Demotic: Smith & Martin 2009.
129. Shaked 2004: 22; Naveh & Shaked 2012: 37–52.
130. PF 871.
131. It is possible, but not certain, that Driver 1956: no. 13, which is a more personal letter between two lower ranking officials, was folded differently (Whitehead 1974: 14, n. 3).
132. Naveh & Shaked 2012: 187, 189.
133. Kaptan 2002: 13–27.
134. Hughes 1984. The most recent translation of the correspondence is Martin 2011²: C2.
135. Cowley 1923: no. 26: the order went from Arshama to an Egyptian official, Wahpremah, and was communicated to his chief secretary Anani, while Nabuaqab (“scribe”) wrote out the Aramaic order; Sasobek (a plainly Egyptian PN) is noted, in Demotic: “Sasobek wrote.”
136. A probable exception is Driver 1956: no. 6, see above n. 100.
137. Driver 1956: no. 4; cf. nos. 6 and 7.
138. Driver 1956: nos. 6–10.
139. Note Whitehead 1974: 27, who suggests that Aramaic *ktb*, literally “write,” is best translated “dictate.”
140. Stolper 1989.
141. Cowley 1923: no. 26.
142. Cf. Henkelman 2008a; 147–153 on *dumme*.
143. See Smith & Martin 2009, S.H5–DP 434, obv. II 3: “Artaya knows this order.”
144. Driver 1956: no. 8.

145. For the hint of a similar position in the Demotic text cited in n. 143, see Smith & Martin 2009.
146. Driver 1956: no. 3, outside.
147. Driver 1956: nos. 8–10.
148. Cowley 1923: no. 21.
149. Razmjou 2008: 55.
150. Cf. Razmjou 2008: 51–55.
151. Metzger et al. 1979.
152. Briant 1998a.
153. Temples had their archives, too, extracts from which were at times—often much later—published on stone, cf., for example, Sherwin-White 1985 (Priene); Briant 1998b (Sardis); FGh 532 (Lindos Chronicle). The Gadatas inscription, purporting to be a letter from Darius I to an official (? no title is given) in Magnesia-Maeander (western Turkey) referring to a grant of tax exemptions for the Apollo temple from the second century AD, could be another example, but the arguments against its authenticity are very strong, with little that can be convincingly defined as emanating from the Achaemenid chancellery (Briant 2003). Note also Tacitus' cynical observations (*Annals* III 59–61) about the spuriousness of temple claims to be in receipt of royal exemptions. As the Gadatas letter would be the unique instance of a royal grant of privileges to a temple in the Achaemenid period preserved in this form, it is safest to exclude it from discussion. Note that most of the discussion in favour of seeing Persian grants of privileges to Jerusalem in Ezra as authentic is based on accepting the genuineness of the Gadatas inscription. The obvious circularity of the argument makes the use of either inadmissible (Kuhrt 2007b).
154. The fundamental study of sealing protocol and iconography in Persepolis is Garrison & Root 2001; see also Henkelman 2008a: 95–102.
155. This is argued to be the case not only for many of the Persepolis seals, but also the Daskyleion bullae (Kaptan 2002).
156. The order concerns the issue of wine for divine cult.
157. We know the earlier and the replacement seal, see fig. 5.6.
158. See above, n. 142.
159. See M.B. Garrison in Ma & Tuplin, forthcoming.
160. Naveh & Shaked 2012: 187, C2 Seal.
161. What it looked like is uncertain. There is no evidence for a single image as attested for the Assyrian empire (see Radner, this volume); see Garrison & Root 2001: 10: "Unfortunately, there is no known seal preserved either through ancient impressions or as a seal artefact that can be securely identified as one of the Achaemenid king's personal seals or seals of his royal office. The known seals with royal name inscriptions of the Persian empire are the seals of officials and/or official seals, but they are not those of the king acting either as an individual or in the capacity of ruler."
162. Xen. *Hell.* I 4. Cf. also the king's answer to Pausanias; according to Thucydides (I 129), Xerxes gave the letter to Artabazus (the new governor of Hellespontine Phrygia) and "told him... show him (sc. Pausanias) the seal."
163. Cf. the discussion of chancellors and secretaries/scribes above, section 3.4.
164. According to Herodotus, Oroites had a thousand Persians in his bodyguard.

165. See Garrison's forthcoming discussion of Arshama's seal (above, n. 159), which he has now identified in the Persepolis Fortification Archive, suggesting that it was an heirloom seal, perhaps that of his father, who may indeed have been a member of the royal family (personal communication).
166. Driver 1956: nos. 1–3 and 5.
167. Driver 1956: no. 11.
168. Driver 1956: no. 13.
169. Xen. *Anab.* I 6, 2–3.
170. E.g., Hdt. VI 97; VI 101.
171. Xen. *Hell.* I 5, 5.
172. Xen. *Hell.* IV 16.
173. Xen. *Anab.* I 2, 4.
174. FGrH 688 F13(11).
175. Diod. XIV 26, 4.
176. E.g., Hdt. IX 3,1; cf. Diod. XV 4, 2.
177. Thuc. I 128.
178. Hdt. VIII 85; 90; Esther 6, 1.
179. Note that the fact that the “Gadatas letter” contains this phrase has been one of the arguments advanced for seeing it as genuine, although the likelihood that it has been fabricated on the basis of the Xerxes letter in Thucydides (above, section 3.3) is very strong; van den Hout 1949:150–52. Cf. n. 153.
180. Briant 1988.
181. Xen. *Cyrop.* VIII 3, 25; Plut. *Artax.* 5, 6.
182. E.g., Xen. *Hell.* 4.1–2; Plut. *Them.* 138.
183. Allen 2005.
184. Xen. *Cyrop.* VIII 3,10; *Hell.* II 1,8.
185. For the issue of *proskynesis* and what precisely it involved, see most recently Wiesehöfer 2003; Briant 1996: 234–235 [2002: 222–223]; Rollinger 2011.

CHAPTER 6: HELLENISTIC ROYAL LETTERS

1. I wish to express my deep gratitude to Riet van Bremen (University College London) for her careful reading of this chapter and for improving my English with patience and acumen. The following abbreviations are used in this chapter: *Bull. ép.* = *Bulletin épigraphique* (referred to by year and rubric number); *GIBM* = Newton, Hicks, Hirschfeld & Marshall 1874–1916; *I. Erythrai* = Engelmann & Merkelbach 1972; *I. Ephesos* II = Börker & Merkelbach 1979; *I. Ephesos* V = Börker & Merkelbach 1980; *I. Estremo Oriente* = Canali De Rossi 2004; *I. Iasos* = Blümel 1985; *I. Ilion* = Frisch 1975; *I. Kyme* = Engelmann 1976; *I. Labraunda* III.1 = Crampa 1969; *I. Labraunda* III.2 = Crampa 1972; *I. Mylasa* = Blümel 1987; *I. Milet* I.9 = Rehm 1928; *I. Pessinous* = Strubbe 2005; *I. Smyrna* = Petzl 1982–90; *I. Stratonikeia* = Şahin 1981–90; *I. Sultan Dağı* = Jonnes 2002; *I. Tralleis* = Poljakov 1989; *IG* = *Inscriptiones Graecae*; *IGLSyr.* 3.2 = Jalabert & Mouterde 1953; *IGLSyr.* 7 = Rey-Coquais 1970; *Inscr. Didyma* = Rehm 1958; *Inscr. Magnesia* = Kern 1900; *Inscr. Pergamon* = Fränkel 1890; *Inscr. Priene* = Hiller von Gaertringen 1906; *OGIS* = Dittenberger 1903–05; *RC* = Welles 1934; *Sardis* = Buckler & Robinson 1932; *SEG* = *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*.

2. Apart from the many biographies of individual Hellenistic kings, indispensable recent reference works are, for the Antigonids: Hammond & Walbank 1988; for the Seleukids: Kuhrt & Sherwin-White 1993; Capdetrey 2007; for the Ptolemies: Hölbl 1994; Huß 2001; for the Attalids: Hansen 1971²; Hopp 1977; Allen 1983; Virgilio 1993.
3. Mari 2006: 209.
4. Fraser 1972; Bagnall 1976; Mooren 1977; Husson & Valbelle 1992. On the supposed and much debated “special case” of Egypt cf. most recently Legras 2012.
5. Institutions: Bikerman 1938; Bengtson 1944. Kings and cities: Heuss 1937; Bikerman 1939; Musti 1966; Ma 2002: 150–74. One may add the central question about the nature of the Seleukid state recently brought up again by Capdetrey 2008; 2010.
6. Hatzopoulos 1996; Mari 2006, with full bibliography; Hatzopoulos 2011; Ma 2011.
7. Ptolemies: Manning 2010: 165–201; Huß 2011; Seleukids: Capdetrey 2007; Attalids: Allen 1983.
8. Macedonia: Mari 2006; Ptolemies: Mueller 2006; Seleukids: Ma 2002; Capdetrey 2007: 191–224; Attalids: Savalli-Lestrade 1996; 2001a; Thonemann 2013.
9. Gauthier 1984; 1993a; Habicht 1995. On the foundation of cities, a distinctive royal practice already among the Successors: Cohen 1995; 2006—two volumes which bring out the importance of πόλεις for the Hellenistic kingdoms.
10. Virgilio 2011; on the project: 69–75. Cf. *RC* vii.
11. Virgilio 2011: 73. In the literary sources, royal letters are attested for Alexander, namely to Darius (Arrianus, *Anab.* 2.14.4–9) and to the Rhodians (*Liber de morte Alexandri Magni*, 107–108), as well as for the Seleukids (Josephus, *AJ* 12.138–153, 262–64; 2 Macc., 9.19–27, 11.16–33; 1 Macc., 10.18–20, 25–45; 11.30–37, 58–60; 13.36–40; 15.2–9; Athenaeus 12.547a–b.) and for the Ptolemies (Josephus, *AJ* 12.28–31, 36–39, 45–56; 13.65–71; 1 Macc., 10.51–56; 11.9–10). Discussions: Habicht 2006; Gauger 2000; Ma 2000; Schwartz 2008: 349–68, 392–413; Muccioli 2010.
12. The main corpora are: *RC* (inscriptions from “Asia” and from “islands in Asiatic waters”); Lenger 1980² (letters, ordinances [προστάγματα] and epistolary προστάγματα on papyri and inscriptions from Egypt, Cyprus, Cyrene and Thera); Hatzopoulos 1996 with Mari 2006 and Tziafalias & Helly 2010 (inscriptions from Macedonia).
13. Savalli-Lestrade 2003: 19; Virgilio 2009: 401; Virgilio 2011: 73–74. Following the principle set out in *RC* vii, Asia Minor and the Near East include also their offshore islands.
14. On the other hand, the Ptolemaic and Antigonid correspondence found in Asia Minor consists of a mere 20 and 21 letters, respectively. One may also add two, or possibly three, letters written by Lysimachos to Priene (*RC* 6, cf. Sherwin-White 1985: 76–80; perhaps *RC* 8, cf. Sherwin-White 1985: 88) and to Samos (= Fig. 6.4; *IG* 12.6:155, cf. *OGIS* I: 13; *RC* 7; Magnetto 1997: no. 20).
15. The Ptolemies in Egypt on the other hand also used προστάγματα (Lenger 1980²) and διαγράμματα (Modrzejewski 1974) for the expression of the king’s orders and wishes; the Antigonids in Macedonia and related European areas also wrote διαγράμματα (Welles 1938; Bikerman 1940; Kallérís 1984; Hatzopoulos 1996, I: 396–429; Mari 2006: 211–12; Hatzopoulos 2006: 82–84). Ptolemaic and Antigonid documents found in Asia Minor consist, however, only of letters.
16. In Aegina in the age of Eumenes II and Attalos II: *OGIS* I: 329, lines 13–15 with Gauthier 1993b; in Cyzicos and Pergamon under Attalos III (135 BC): **A27b**, lines 16–17; **A27c**, line 16 (Virgilio 2011: 51–55) = Fig. 6.3. The two texts on **A18** from

- Taşkuyucak near Daldis (Lydia) were interpreted in the first edition of Herrmann & Malay 2007: no. 32 as a possible *prostagma* of Eumenes II, followed by the king's report regarding the measures taken. However, **A18a** is certainly a letter to an official (Virgilio 2011: 52–53) and **A18b** is here considered a letter of Eumenes II to an official, with verbatim quotes of the petition of the community of Apolloniou Charax (following Wörrle 2009: 427–28, n. 76; cf. Bencivenni, forthcoming; the realisation of the toponym was suggested to me by H. Müller), *contra* Thonemann 2011: 24–25 who sees **A18b** as the petition of the community mentioned in **A18a**, lines 5–6),
17. Étienne & Migeotte 1998: 144–45, ll. 23–24 (decree of Colophon); van der Spek 1995: 227–34, no. 7, ll. 34, 38 (cuneiform tablet with a lease of temple land from Uruk).
 18. Bencivenni 2011: 140–46 and below p. 151 and n. 50.
 19. Lenger 1980²: no. 32.
 20. Bikerman 1938: 190–97.
 21. Bencivenni 2010: 152, n. 13.
 22. Two from a Seleukid official in **S49**; one from Seleukid Jamnia on the Sea in **S67**; one from an Attalid priest in **A10**. Cf. Capdetrey 2007: 338–39.
 23. E.g., in Cyrene: *SEG* 9.5.
 24. Lenger 1980²: nos. 51–52.
 25. Lenger 1980²: nos. 75–76.
 26. Letters on papyrus from Egypt are themselves distinguishable according to content and the relation between the correspondents. On the categorization of archive letters: Vandorpe 2008: 157.
 27. On papyrus: Muir 2009: 16–17. Leather document written by the satrap of Babylonia and other royal functionaries after the meeting with king Antiochos I in Sardeis and sent from Seleukeia on the Tigris to Babylon in 274 BC: Sachs & Hunger 1988: Diary No. -273, rev. 34'–36'. Among the texts on perishable material found in the archives at Dura-Europos, the only two Seleukid texts—sales of land of the 2nd century BC—are leather documents (“parchment” in the broad sense of the term, as specified by the editors of P. Dura, 15, 34; Leriche 1996: 158).
 28. Dealing with written royal communication excludes, for the purpose of this paper, other significant instruments of state language, such as images (Ma 2010) and images on coins (Iossif, forthcoming).
 29. Ceccarelli 2005: 346–57; Gauger 2005; Muir 2009: 83–90; Sickinger 2013: 125–31 rightly stresses that letters were not exclusively royal and the use of official letters was an established feature of the administrative practice of a *polis* like Sparta. That the senders are the Spartan kings or officials shows that letters were closely associated with monarchic governments.
 30. Sickinger 2013: 132–34. Letters of Philip II in Demosthenes: Ceccarelli 2005: 357, n. 38. On the sender of the letter from Olevni ascribed to Philip II by Hatzopoulos 1995; 1996, II: no. 5, cf. Badian 1989: 68, n. 24; Arena 2003 (Philip V).
 31. Form and content of the administrative documents of the Macedonian court: Hatzopoulos 1996, I: 396–429; Mari 2006. Cf. the six pieces of correspondence (letters and διαγράμματα) written by Alexander and by Philip Arridhaïos: to Chios (Heisserer 1980: 79–95, 96–111); to Priene (*I. Priene* 1; Heisserer 1980: 162–68; Sherwin-White 1985; Thonemann 2012); to Tegea (Heisserer 1980: 205–29); concerning Philip-poi (Hatzopoulos 1996, II: no. 6; cf. Pilhofer 2000: no. 160A); to Eresos (Heisserer 1980: 27–78, Γb, ll. 21–28; Ellis-Evans 2012).

32. Plutarchos, *An seni sit gerenda respublica*, 11.
33. E.g., the correspondence between Antiochos I or II and Erythrae (**S5**); between Olympichos, στρατηγός of Seleukos II, and Mylasa in the years 240–220 BC (**S12**, **S13** [Fig. 6.5], **S17**, **S18**, **S19**); between Antiochos III, queen Laodike and Teos (203–190 BC; **S46–48**); between Laodike and Iasos around 196 BC (**S51**; Fig. 6.8).
34. E.g., the correspondence between Antiochos III (and Laodike) and Sardis in 213 BC (**S24–26**); between Zeuxis (as governor of Asia Minor and viceroy) and Amyzon in 203 BC (**S38**, **S40**). For the typologies of city statuses: Ma 2002: 150–74; Capdetrey 2007: 209–24.
35. This holds true for all the letters addressed to the cities and explains the positive contents of the documents, where only in very few cases traces of the king's anger can be recognized (Lysimachos in *RC* 6, lines 11–12; Attalos, the brother of Eumenes II, in **A21b**, lines 9–10).
36. *IG* 12.6:155 (*OGIS* I: 13; *RC* 7; Magnetto 1997: no. 20).
37. Sherwin-White 1985.
38. Magnetto 2008: 110, 177 with reference to line 171; Boffo 2013: 204–05 n. 9.
39. *RC* xl. Sickinger 2013: 137. Cases of royal letters inscribed or newly inscribed later than the original draft by the king (or royal official) are however known: some of the letters from Labraunda (**S12**, **S14**, **S18**); the seven letters by Eumenes II and Attalos to Attis, the priest of Cybele in Pessinous, dated between 163 and 156 BC and inscribed in the first century BC (**A19**); the letters of Seleukos I and his son Antiochos and by a second-century king about privileges of the temple at Carian Nysa, inscribed in the first century BC (**S3**, **S60**); a letter of Attalos III about the privileges of Carian Hiera Kome, inscribed in the second century AD (**A28**); a letter and a ὑπομνηματισμός by a king Antiochos about the privileges of the temple of Zeus in Baitokaike near Arados island (**S68**).
40. *RC* xl.
41. An illustrative list of complete letters addressed to cities without the inscription clause in Bencivenni 2010: 155–57.
42. On the city: Savalli-Lestrade 1998: 164–65.
43. E.g., a letter of Seleukos I and Antiochos to Sopatros (**S3**); the three letters by Antiochos I to Meleagros (**S4**); a letter of Seleukos II to Herophantos (**S9**); a letter of Antiochos III to an official from Soloi (**S45**); a letter of Antiochos V to Nes[...] about the city of Iamnia on the Sea (**S67**).
44. Attalids: **A4**, **A10** (three), **A11a**, **A14**, **A18** (two), **A20**, **A27a** (= Fig. 6.3), **A28** (for a total amount of eleven *contra* six letters in Virgilio 2011: 50–51, n. 107). Seleukids: **S3**, **S4** (three), **S7** (three), **S9**, **S11**, **S12b**, **S30**, **S32** (three), **S33** (five), **S44**, **S45**, **S49** (six), **S53**, **S55** (two), **S56** (two), **S57** (two), **S58**, **S59a**, **S65**, **S66** (three; Fig. 6.6), **S67**, **S68** (two).
45. Second copy attached to four accompanying letters found in Philomelion (modern Akşehir) in Phrygia (**S33**). Cf. Ma 2012: 143–49; 153–54.
46. For the problematic reading of the date: Virgilio 2003²: 184–86; Petropoulou 2006 argues for 238/7 BC under Seleukos II, but cf. *SEG* 56.1844.
47. The first ὑπόμνημα has been dated to 202/1 BC in the first edition of Landau 1966 and by Savalli-Lestrade 2006: 167 n. 108.
48. Second copy from the region of Kermanshah in Media: **S56**; third copy from Laodikeia in Media, modern Nehavend in Iran: **S57**.

49. Mari 2006: 217.
50. Letter-*πρόσταγμα*α are **S7**, **S32 (S33)**, **S55 (S56, S57)**, **S66** (Fig. 6.6). One may add **S58**, which is preserved separately from the dossier of documents to which it may have originally belonged (and so the definition as *πρόσταγμα* is lacking). **S65**, the letter of Seleukos IV to the *ἐπιστάτης* and the city of Seleukeia Pieria (186 BC), on the other hand, shares the contemporary definition as *πρόσταγμα* by the addressees involved, but is fragmentary towards the end and lacks the inscription clause, which could have been present only at the end. On the typology: Bencivenni 2010: 176–77; 2011: 144–45.
51. Bencivenni 2011: 148.
52. The fragmentary letter of Eumenes II to the city of Temnos (**A6**) should be considered in the same sense. The inscription clause might be related to a specific request made by the civic ambassadors, beneficiaries of the king's help (as integrated in *RC* 48, line 24 *contra Inschr. Pergamon* 157).
53. *RC* xxxix–xl.
54. Ma 2002: 179–206; 235–42.
55. Bencivenni 2011: 148–51.
56. **S1**, lines 10–29 and **S2**, very fragmentary; **S3**.
57. **S5**, which is either by Antiochos I or II; **S4**. Antiochos II is not taken into consideration because his only letter to an official, Metrophanes, (**S7**) belongs to the typology of the letter-*πρόσταγμα*.
58. **S8** and **S10**; **S9** and **S11 (S12b)**.
59. Ma 2002: 284–372 presents all documents of Antiochos III except for **S33**; the eastern copies of his no. 37 (**S55**): **S56–57**; the letters from outside western Asia Minor: **S34** from Magnesia on the Maeander; **S49** from Scythopolis; **S58** from Daphnai; **S61** from Kos; **S43** from Mylasa, sanctuary of Sinuri (previously deemed uncertain); **S45** from Soloi (previously thought Ptolemaic).
60. **A5**; **A4**.
61. **A6–9**, **A12–13**, **A15–17**; **A14**, **A18**.
62. **A11**, **A21–24** and **A26**; **A20** and **A27a** (Fig. 6.3).
63. **A27bc** (Fig. 6.3); **A28**.
64. Cf. Cohen 2006: 127.
65. E.g., *I. Smyrna* 2.1: 573, lines 11–12.
66. *RC* xxxix referring to **A19**.
67. Boffo 2007: 114–19 considers it a sacred estate administrated by a priest whose power was defined by the king (and by the Romans).
68. Welles himself noted in *RC* xli that “there is no reason to suppose that they had ever been published before.” Davies 2003: 335 acutely speaks of (un)diplomatic correspondence.
69. Virgilio 2011: 55. This cautious suggestion, however, also takes into account the absence of any Attalid document comparable to an ordinance or to the Seleukid letter-*πρόσταγμα*. As Thonemann 2013: 7 points out, the significant difference between Attalos I, on one hand, who wrote directly to his subject cities about the recognition of the Panhellenic status of the festival of Artemis Leukophryene (**A5**, lines 17–21) and Antiochos III, on the other, who wrote to his own officials on the same matter in order that his subject cities might recognize the status in question (**S34**,

lines 25–28) is due to the small size of the Attalid kingdom in the late third century and to the existence of one single central chancery office.

70. Ma 2002: 147–50; 2012: 143–49. The same kind of transmission, where an official writes to another official while adding one or more previous letters (including the king's), is found in Ptolemaic Egypt and it has been correctly compared to the modern practice of forwarding email with comments: Vandorpe 2008: 166.
71. Savalli-Lestrade 2003: 35.
72. Seleukos I to Miletos: **S1**; Olympichos to Mylasa: **S15**; Attalos II (?) to Ilion: **A23**.
73. Antiochos III to Kos: **S61**; Seleukos IV to Seleukeia: **S65** (strictly speaking, the letter is addressed to the ἐπιστάτης Theophilos, a royal official, and to the city); Eumenes I to Pergamon: **A3** (= Fig. 6.7); Eumenes II to Tabai, **A17**; Attalos III to Cyzicos and to Pergamon: **A27bc** (= Fig. 6.3).
74. Eumenes II to Iasos and to Kos: **A12–13**.
75. Zeuxis (?) to Amyzon: **S38**; Antiochos III to the army at Amyzon: **S39**; Zeuxis (?) to Amyzon: **S40**; Zeuxis to the army at Labraunda: **S42**; Laodike to Iasos: **S51** (Fig. 6.8).
76. Ma 2002: 235–42; Sickinger 2013: 134; and n. 31 above. On the capacity to write letters to cities, constitutive of the Hellenistic royal power, see the famous passages by Polybios 5.57.5 (the Seleukid usurper Achaïos wearing the diadem, declaring himself king and starting to write to the cities); 21.41.2 (the cities of western Asia Minor freed, after Apameia and the defeat of Antiochos III, from garrisons, tributes and royal προστάγματα).
77. I follow for the identification of the kings involved and the dates Hopp 1977: 70–74 and Savalli-Lestrade 2001a: 87–88 (*contra* the editions). The first letter cannot be by Eumenes II, as reported by Virgilio 2011: 45, as in line 6 the author refers to that very king.
78. For a discussion of “contract clauses”: Ma 2002: 179–80.
79. In the letter of Eumenes II to Tabai (**A17**), dated to the same period and referring to the same war, the list of the many merits of Tabai's citizen Koteies, on behalf of whom the king writes, focusses the praise of the king on the city itself, which no doubt had entered the king's power (Guizzi 2006: 197).
80. Hopp 1977: 73 n. 80 proposes a date of 143 BC. On this correspondence cf. also Kosmetatou 1997: 25–26.
81. Schubart 1920; Herzog 1930; Schroeter 1932; RC; Wilhelm 1943.
82. Bertrand 1985; 2006; Capdetrey 2006; 2008; Ma 2002; Nicolet 1990; Savalli-Lestrade 2003; Virgilio 2010.
83. Ma 2002: 178. Cf. Ma 2000.
84. Ma 2002: 242.
85. Gauthier 2011: 285–94; Virgilio 2011: 19–22.
86. Vandorpe 2008: 155 recalling the treatise *Epistolimaioi Characteres*.
87. The only three extant Attalid documents written by officials and addressed to officials (**A10**), which may prove the use of the pre-existing Seleukid administrative system by Eumenes II, are significantly linked to the enlargement of the Attalid state after Apameia: Thonemann 2013: 7–10.
88. Virgilio 2003²: 123–24; Capdetrey 2006; Capdetrey 2007: 344–50; Virgilio 2011: 34–37.
89. **S32–33**; **S55–57**. Cf. Ma 2002: 63–64.
90. Iossif & Lorber 2007: 63–64.

91. Van der Spek 1993: 97–98, regarding Sachs & Hunger 1988: Diary No. -273, rev. 34'–36'.
92. Savalli-Lestrade 2003: 36.
93. Roueché & Sherwin-White 1985: 32.
94. Criscuolo 2011: 471–72.
95. Capdetrey 2007: 348–49; Virgilio 2011: 37.
96. **S9** (cf. Polybios 5.44.1). References to horse-rearing and to grasslands are rare in Greek Hellenistic inscriptions: see **S63** for a royal letter concerning the exemption from the billeting of soldiers and from the supply of fodder and straw granted to a village near Telmessos in Lycia.
97. Civic ambassadors conveying decrees as soon as the first embassy leaves for the (Seleukid) kings are attested, for instance, in the recently found inscription from Aigai (Malay & Riel 2009) and in *IG* 12.4: 33 from Kos.
98. *IG* 12.6: 11, lines 5–20.
99. On Alexander's archive, located wherever the king was: Plutarchos, *Eum.*, 2.6.
100. Sometimes two, as was the case in Labraunda, where a first copy of Seleukos II's letter to Olympichos was inscribed around 240 and a second in the Imperial age (**S11–12**). On the "presence" of the kings in the cities' archives see Boffo 2013.
101. No similar discovery exists, as far as I know, for the Attalid kingdom. Some official seal impressions with royal portraits from Kallion/Kallipolis (Aetolia) have been attributed to Attalid kings (Pantos 1996: 190) but without definitive arguments (Fleischer 1996: 321). A calcedony seal with a portrait in the collection of the British Museum has been attributed to Philetairos (Walters 1926: no. 1184). Plenty of official seal impressions featuring Ptolemaic kings are known, mainly from the so-called Edfu hoard (Plantzos 1999: 27–28), from Nea Paphos, Cyprus (Kyrieleis 1996) and from the little island of Geronisos near Cyprus (Connelly & Plantzos 2006: 270–75).
102. Sealing a document, in the Hellenistic period, means, from a material point of view, "(en)closing with a seal" ("versiegeln") and not yet, as happened in Roman times, "authenticate a document with a seal" below the written text ("untersiegeln"): Vandorpe 1996: 250–51. The placing of a seal to close a document, anyway, while preventing the unauthorised opening of the document itself, attests and guarantees the authenticity of the author/sender (Pantos 1996: 185–86; Invernizzi 2003: 303–304). It is possible that in Hellenistic Babylonia double documents were used (especially for contracts), inscribed twice and sealed only partly so that the text could not be falsified, as in Egypt (Vandorpe 1996: 232–40; Molloy 1996: 150; Invernizzi 2003: 305).
103. Wallenfels 1996: 114; Rostovtzeff 1932: 5, 24, pl. 1.
104. Wallenfels 1994: 1.
105. Vandorpe 1996: 241.
106. Invernizzi 2003: 305–307.
107. Uruk: Rostovtzeff 1932: 49. For the public archive of Seleukeia excavated by the Italian mission see Invernizzi 1996: 134; Invernizzi 2003: 314.
108. Rostovtzeff 1932: 49–54 (uninscribed impressions: nos. 4–5, 11–13, 15, 68–72, 80–81).
109. Invernizzi 2004: I 25–32.
110. Rostovtzeff 1932: 57, 65–74; Capdetrey 2007: 341–43.
111. Invernizzi 2003: 307–308, 315–17.

112. As in Egypt: Vandorpe 1996: 241, 246. For the common practice of sealing letters in the Greek world see Plantzos 1999: 20.
113. Invernizzi 2003: 317–19 (without references to catalogue numbers but probably referring to Invernizzi 2004: I 26, nos. Se 6, 17–19, 30–31, 37, 47–48). Nea Paphos (Ptolemaic portraits): Kyrieleis 1996; Kallion/Kallipolis (Ptolemaic and Seleukid portraits in a private archive kept by public officers, the στρατηγοί of the Aetolic League): Pantos 1996.
114. Plantzos 1999: 22. The charge of ἐπὶ τῆς σφραγίδος is attested for the Attalid kings: Demetrios son of Apollonios, στρατηγός in Ephesos for king Eumenes II (*I. Ephesos* 201 and Savalli-Lestrade 2001b: 270 n. 20), was probably followed in the same office by Philopoimen son of Andronikos, for whom king Attalos II set up a dedication in Samos (*IG* 12.6: 469, Savalli-Lestrade 1996: 166–68).
115. Fleischer 1996: 324.
116. Baldus 1987: 445–46 (a lion with a sword near his foreleg and a sun on his back for Alexander), 1978 (a lion protome for Lysimachos). It seems rather doubtful that the gold finger-ring with an oval bezel engraved with a Nike fastening a nail into an oval shield placed against a tree trunk may be connected with Alexander (Marshall 1907: no. 51, from Kerch, Crimea, second half of the fourth century). The inscription, obviously in reverse direction, is: Παρμένων | βασιλεῖ (or Βασιλεῖ). The cautious hypothesis expressed by Furtwängler 1900: I, pl. IX, no. 44; II, 47, of a possible gift made by Parmenion to Alexander the Great has been uncritically repeated through the years with some minor adjustments: e.g. recently Neverov 2005: 187, who reads Ἀρμένων | βασιλεῖ (“de ce que avait appartenu au roi (Alexandre)”). The ring was made by a certain Parmenon for a king (Dubois 1996: 14) or for a man named Basileus (Guarducci 1978: 524–25).
117. The papyrus bearing a royal ἐντολή, followed by a copy of a petition, Wilcken 1927: I, no. 106 (Lenger 1980²: no. 62), contains the farewell formula Ἐρωσ[θε] in l. 8 written in a second hand (interpreted as the original handwriting of the king himself), and arrived in the Leiden Museum with a clay seal impression figuring an eagle which was used to close the rolled document (Leemans 1843: 42, facsimile pl. II, no. 14). Wilcken left open the question regarding a possible second clay seal (not preserved) which may have stood on the right side of the farewell formula and served as the king’s *Untersiegung*.
118. Wallenfels 1994: 9; pl. 1, no. 1, 276/5 BC: the inscription reads “the seal of the king” (comparison with seal S-3718 from Seleukeia: Invernizzi 2004: I 28–30 and pl. 13); Molloy 1997: 99; Wallenfels 2000: 336; cf. Joannès 2012: 248.
119. Vandorpe 1996: 241 and catalogue nos. 72–87.
120. Some hints in Plantzos 1999: 20.
121. Above, n. 117.
122. *IG* 12.3: 91, lines 13–15; Boffo 2013: 204 n. 8.
123. Welles in *RC* 60 reads [δυν]ηθῆς but considers also [βουλ.]ηθῆς (249, n. 11), which is preferred by Strubbe, *I. Pessinous* 6.
124. Capdetrey 2008: 344; Invernizzi 2003: 311.
125. Invernizzi 2003: 313–15.
126. Leriche 1996.
127. As Pantos 1996 and Invernizzi 2003: 317–319 argue concerning Aetolian Kallion/Kallipolis and Seleukeia, respectively.

128. On the functionaries working in the royal chancery and writing the king's correspondence, their possible rhetorical training and the influence of the Hellenistic treatises about epistolography, see Virgilio 2011: 58–69. The letters show a number of rhetorical formulations: the extensive use of the triad in the letter of Antiochos I or II to Erythrae (S5) and the opening *praeteritio* of the letter of Eumenes II to Tabai may represent two clear instances (A17).
129. Boffo 2003: 45–69; Boffo 2013.
130. Ph. Gauthier, *Bull. ép.* 2005: 525; Boffo 2013: 205.
131. I share Ma's (2012: 149, 154–55) views about the inscriptions' "authority".
132. Note the possible second letter in S60.
133. Note the possible second letter in A23 and the disputed S63. The letters of A19 probably correspond to the fragments of letters of Eumenes II discussed by T. Drew-Bear in his 1972 Harvard Ph.D. dissertation (*Studies in Greco-Roman Phrygia*; summary: Drew-Bear 1975), thought unpublished by Ma 2013: 80. Some other questionable cases are not included here: [1] the letter of what may either be an Attalid king or a Roman magistrate to Priene, followed by the arbitration of Smyrna between Miletos and Priene (11 BC): *GIBM* III, 412; *Inscr. Priene* 27; *RC* 46; Ager 1996: no. 100 (Roman); cf. Allen 1983: 104 n. 115 (Roman); Sherwin-White 1985: 72 n. 21 (Roman); [2] the letter of either Attalos III or a Roman emperor to Hierapolis (Lydia): *OGIS* I: 333; *RC* 68 (Attalos III); Rigsby 1996: no. 216 (Roman).

CHAPTER 7: THE ROMAN EMPIRE

1. I should like to thank Karen Radner for inviting me to take part in this project and for being such a tolerant editor, and to all those who were so enlightening and informative in the two workshops in April 2011 and July 2012. Thanks are owed also to Tim Barnes, Salvatore Cosentino, Denis Feissel, Genevra Kornbluth, Charlotte Roueché and Benet Salway and to my partner Ashley, for his help with the images. Finally, I offer this paper in tribute to Sir Fergus Millar, not only for his insightful comments on my draft, but also as my first and most influential academic mentor. The following abbreviations are used in this chapter: *AE* = *L'Année Epigraphique*; *ARS* = Johnson et al. 1961; *CIL* = *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*; *CJ* = *Codex Iustinianus* (ed. P. Krüger, Berlin 1877); *CTh* = *Codex Theodosianus* (ed. T. Mommsen & P. Meyer, Berlin 1905); *FIRA*² = Riccobono et al. 1940–43; *IG* = *Inscriptiones Graecae*; *PLRE* = Jones, Martindale & Morris 1971–1992; *P. Oxy.* = *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (Egypt Exploration Society, London 1898–).
2. Oliver 1953: 899.
3. Millar 1973; 1992²: 213–214, 611–612.
4. Sherk 1969.
5. Skeat 1964; Adams, forthcoming.
6. *P. Leiden* Z; publ. Feissel & Worp 1988 = *Sammelbuch* XX 14606; also *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores* XLVI 1392. Of the letter, only the subscription is sufficiently legible.
7. Purpura 2009: 155 n. 1.
8. Benner 1975; Millar 1992²: 252–259.
9. Millar 1992²: 213–228, 313–341.
10. Millar 1992²: 313–317.
11. Burton 1976.

12. The specific term *subscriptio* for this type of text is used only in the early Empire, but as a general term it can be used for anything the emperor adds (subscribes) to a range of types of document, including letters, throughout the imperial period.
13. Usually distinct from ἀντίγραφον, the normal equivalent of *exemplum* (copy).
14. Millar 1992²: 240–252; Corcoran 2000²: 43–73.
15. E.g. Pliny, *Letters* X.106–107; the Donatist petition to Constantine (Corcoran 2000²: 156).
16. Mathisen 2002; Corcoran 2007a: 227–228.
17. Millar 1992²: 228–240 (general hearings), 375–385 (city embassies), 507–537 (judicial cases); Corcoran 2000²: 254–260. A formal “oration held in the Senate” would be delivered by the emperor’s quaestor.
18. Corcoran 2000²: 261; cf. Meyer 2004: 73–90.
19. Corcoran 2008.
20. For collections or lists of epigraphic and papyrological texts, see Oliver 1989 with Anastasiadis & Souris 2000 (Greek only); Feissel 1993; 2009; Purpura 2009; cf. Hänel 1857; *FIRA*² I. English translations are usefully collected in *ARS*.
21. *AE* 1937.232 (*FIRA*² I no. 93) and *AE* 2007.1224.
22. Note that the Egyptian heading to Diocletian’s Prices edict (*CIL* III, pp. 802–803) contains the fullest form of titulature for all four members of the imperial college, while the Stratonicea heading consists solely of an abbreviation in just three letters: *ESL* = *Exemplum sacrarum litterarum* (Corcoran 2008 = *AE* 2008.1396).
23. Corcoran 2007a; 2012.
24. Reynolds 1982; Reynolds, Roueché & Bodard 2007.
25. Hauken 1998: 84–126; Calder 1956: no. 305 with *AE* 1999.1577.
26. *CIL* III.781 (cf. 12509), whence *FIRA*² I no. 86, containing an imperial letter (Latin) to Tertullus, legate of Moesia Inferior; imperial letter (Latin) to the procurator Heraclitus; letter (Greek) of the legate to the Tyrani; cf. the Saepinum inscription (*CIL* IX.2438).
27. *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* LVII (2007) no. 1838; cf. Bencivenni, this volume (Fig. 6.6).
28. Trapp 2003.
29. Text and translation: Radice 1969 (Loeb); Williams 1990 (excludes the “private” letters); commentary: Sherwin-White 1966.
30. Millar 2000; Woolf 2006; Noreña 2007.
31. Text and translation: Barrow 1973; discussed also by Sogno 2006: 31–57. The *Relationes* are usually published separately from the letters, but are sometimes considered as constituting most or all of Book 10, after the manner of Pliny. It is not clear that Symmachus himself edited or arranged his *Relationes*. On the letters generally, see also Matthews 2010: 215–253; Salzman 2011: xiii–lxviii. For the problems of transmission, see Callu 2009: LIV–LIX.
32. A few texts addressed from the emperors to Symmachus survive in the Theodosian Code (references in *PLRE* I, Symmachus 4, 865–870), including some dating to his urban prefecture: *CTh* IV.17.4, XI.30.44, *CJ* IX.29.2 (*CTh* I.6.9).
33. Text and translation: Haines 1919–20 (Loeb); commentary: van den Hout 1999.
34. Wright 1913–1923 (Loeb); Bidez & Cumont 1922. Wide-ranging discussions in Baker-Brian & Tougher 2012 (especially the essays by Trapp 2012 and Harries 2012).
35. For interpretations of the *Misopogon*, see Gleason 1986; van Hoof & van Nuffelen 2011.

36. Useful *Regesten* of imperial acts in the later empire can be found in Seeck 1919 (311–476), Lounghis et al. 2005 (476–565) and Dölger 2009² (565–867).
37. Text: Mommsen 1905, vol. I.1; translation: Pharr 1952; study: Matthews 2000. Note that the first five books do not survive intact.
38. Text: Krüger 1877; translation: Frier et al., forthcoming.
39. Gualandi 1963 collects together all quotations of and references to imperial constitutions in the juristic writings.
40. These works are conveniently collected in *FIRA*² II.
41. Text: Mommsen & Meyer 1905, vol. II; translated in Pharr 1952: 487–572.
42. Text: Schöll & Kroll 1895; translation forthcoming by D. Miller & P. Sarris. The Novels mostly date between 535 and 544, but extend even beyond Justinian's death (565) to the joint rule of Justin II and Tiberius II (574–578).
43. Note my attempt to identify such individual letters in the material for the late 3rd and early 4th centuries: Corcoran 2000²: 163–169.
44. The extent to which the imperial archives were the source for Theodosian Code material is subject to considerable dispute, e.g. between Matthews 2000 and Sirks 2007.
45. Usefully collected together in translation with relevant legal materials by Coleman-Norton 1966, but with a terminal date of 535.
46. Pucci ben Zeev 1998. Traditional classical historiography tends not to quote verbatim, but at best reworks (if it does not invent) documents and speeches. For our purposes, the best example is Tacitus's adaptation of Claudius's speech to the Senate known also on the Lyon tablet (Tacitus, *Annales* XI.23–24; *CIL* XIII.1668; Sherk 1988: no. 55).
47. Lawlor & Oulton 1926–1932 (Loeb); Cameron & Hall 1999. The authenticity of the documents quoted is now generally recognized: Jones 1954; Mitchell 1988.
48. Not only the Greek ecclesiastical historians (Sozomen, Socrates, Theodoret etc.) and polemicists (Athanasius), but also Latin writers such as Augustine and Optatus (note the latter's Appendix of ten documents: Edwards 1997: 181–201).
49. Silli 1983 gives a good idea of the range of Latin, Greek and other versions of Constantinian texts. Note that Galerius's edict of toleration (311) exists in the original Latin (Lactantius, *De Mort. Pers.* 34 [Creed 1984]), Eusebius's Greek translation (*Hist. Eccl.* 8.17.3–10) and then a retro-translation into Latin by Rufinus (*Hist. Eccl.* 8.17.3–10).
50. Note the recent excellent and useful translations of Chalcedon (451) and Constantinople (553): Price & Gaddis 2005; Price 2009.
51. Kéry 1999.
52. Laws from the period 333–425. Text: Mommsen & Meyer 1905, vol. I.1: 907–921; translation: Pharr 1952: 477–486.
53. Letters and documents dating between 367 and 553. Text: Günther 1895–1898; some translations available via Coleman-Norton 1966.
54. Matthews 2000: 121–167.
55. Accusations Edict: *CTh* 9.5.1, *CJ* 9.8.3 and *FIRA*² I no. 94 (Matthews 2000: 254–270; Corcoran 2007a: 225). Letter of Julian to Secundus: *CTh* I.16.8, *CJ* III.3.5, *CIL* III 459 (*AE* 2000.1370) and III 14198; Salway 2012: 147–150.
56. Severus Alexander to the Bithynians (*P. Oxy.* XVII 2104 and XLIII 3106; Oliver 1989: no. 276; *Digest* 49.1.25); Maximinus's anti-Christian rescript (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* IX.7.3–14; *AE* 1988.1046–1047; Mitchell 1988; Horsley 2007: 240); Constantine to the provincials (*P. Lond.* 878 with Jones 1954; Eusebius, *Vit. Const.* II.24–42); *P. Oxy.*

- LXIII 4400 and Justinian, *Edict* 13 (Schöll & Kroll 1895: 780–795); PSI XIII 1346 (Corcoran 2007b) and Justinian, *Novel* 62.
57. Well surveyed in Volterra 1971.
 58. For the validity of imperial constitutions, see Gaius, *Institutes* I.5; *CTh* I.1–3; Justinian, *Institutes* I.2.6; *Digest* I.4; *CJ* I.14–15, 19–23.
 59. Corcoran 2000²: 95 n. 1 (citing *P. Yale* I.61: prefect of Egypt receives over 1,800 petitions in three days).
 60. Honoré 1994²: 163–181; Corcoran 2000²: 25–42; Connolly 2010: 39–46.
 61. Other interpretations: Corcoran 2000²: 27–28; Connolly 2010: 60.
 62. Private: *Letters* X.1–14 (letter 3 being in fact two letters); Bithynia: *Letters* X.15–121 (letters 17 and 86 each being two letters).
 63. It is presumed that a senator, such as Pliny, only wrote when he was unable to see Trajan in person (Tacitus, *Annales* IV.39.4; Millar 2000).
 64. It seems unlikely that many letters are missing (Sherwin-White 1966: 533–534).
 65. For the Cilician correspondence in chronological order for Cicero's year as proconsul (51–50 BC), see Tyrrell & Purser 1914²; Treggiari 1996².
 66. Sherwin-White 1966: 529–533; Millar 2000. Woolf 2006 regards Book 10 as a carefully redacted artifact, and so useless for establishing the content or sequence of the letters. I do not follow this extreme view.
 67. See *PLRE* I, p. 867. As noted above, section 1.2.1, there are only a few letters to him in the Theodosian Code. Note that *Relatio* 3 (on the Altar of Victory) prompted Ambrose, *Letter* 18 (both directed to Valentinian II).
 68. Barrow 1973: 3; Sogno 2006: 31–57.
 69. Julius Bassus and Varenus Rufus. On prosecutions for corruption, see Brunt 1961. Pliny himself took part in the prosecution of a proconsul of Africa (Marius Priscus: *Letters* II.11).
 70. Thus the future emperor Galba as legate of Tarraconensis overrode citizen status in inflicting punishment (Suetonius, *Galba* 9). Contrast Pliny at *Letters* X.29, 96.
 71. Sootjes 2006: 18–45.
 72. Flower 2010: 131–132.
 73. Millar 1992²: 259–265.
 74. *Inscriptions antiques du Maroc* II.94; Sherwin-White 1973; Millar 1988: 359–360; 1992²: 261–262.
 75. The *locus classicus* for the usability of archives, which is instructive for all periods and places despite being medieval, is the fruitless search of royal records to bolster his claims in Scotland ordered by Edward I of England in 1291 and 1300 (Clanchy 2013³: 154–155).
 76. *CIL* III 411; *FIRA*² I no. 82 (*ARS* no. 253); now *I. Smyrna* no. 597 (Petzl 1982–1990: II.1 80); Millar 1992²: 247. Antoninus's rescript granting permission is dated 8 April 139, the authenticated copy 5 May, which latter would seem not to refer to Hadrian's ruling (which is not inscribed), but Antoninus's rescript, and so cannot indicate how long it might take to acquire an item from the archives. See also *AE* 2009.1349.
 77. On Suetonius and the archives: Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 92–95.
 78. Corcoran 2000²: 29–31. For Galen's recently discovered treatise “Avoiding Distress,” describing the fire and his losses, see Boudon-Millot & Jouanna 2010; English translation: Nutton 2013.
 79. Corcoran 2008.

80. Matthews 2000: 218–219; *contra*: Sirks 2007: 121–136; 2012. There is also much argument about different uses made of copybooks or *commentarii* as opposed to “originals” (whatever that means in this context).
81. *Contra* Sirks 2007: 122–123, who, I think, does not sufficiently take account of the changing or uncertain status of “capitals” in the 4th century.
82. Probably arranged by a literary executor; e.g. Suetonius, who, however, has rather been thought to have taken the material from the imperial archives, when he became *ab epistulis* (Williams 1990: 4). For Pliny and Suetonius, see *Letters* I.18, 24; III.8; V.10; IX.34; X.94–95.
83. Meyer 2004: 171–174.
84. Conant 2013: 42–56.
85. Justinian, *Novel* 15.*pr.* and 15.5.2.
86. On registration of private documents in the municipal *acta*, see Everett 2013: 70–82.
87. E.g. Conant 2013: 46; Ammianus Marcellinus XXVIII.1.20, 6.26.
88. *CJ* I.23.3. It might, however, mean that only originals could be used in court and recorded in the *acta*.
89. Oliver 1989: nos. 220–243 (including the famous set of *Apokrimata*). Texts from this visit continue to come to light (e.g. *P. Oxy.* LXXVII 5114).
90. *Letter* 10*.3–4; cf. *Letter* 24* (Divjak 1987: 172–173, 384–387; Eno 1989: 77–78, 174).
91. *P. Col.* VII 175 (Bagnall & Lewis 1979) = *Sammelbuch* XVI 12692; also *FIRA*² I no. 96; III no. 101. One of the advocates tries to use the ruling in the rescript by turning it on its head!
92. Millar 1992² (same text with afterword); up-to-date reflections in Eich 2012.
93. Millar 1992²: 215–219.
94. E.g. *CTh* I.16.6 (Constantine requiring notification of provincial acclamations for governors). Note that Julian (*Letters* 45–46) chides the prefect of Egypt for not keeping him informed of things he has to learn from others: Harries 2012: 123.
95. Millar 1992²: 410–434.
96. Woolf 2006 argues that the letters of Pliny are too focused and single topic to be realistic, and so must be the result of an editorial pruning process.
97. Evans Grubbs 1995: 275. The *Novel* is in the form of a letter to the praetorian prefect.
98. Millar 1992²: 551–607.
99. The persecution measures are usually called edicts, although writers in Greek use vaguer terms like *grammata* (letters): Corcoran 2000²: 179–182.
100. *Mosaicarum et Romanarum Legum Collatio* XV.3 (*FIRA*² II, 580–581); Corcoran 2000²: 135–136. I do not accept the idea that there had been a general edict issued against the Manichees.
101. For a recent presentation of an activist Constantine, in Christian and non-Christian matters, see Dillon 2012.
102. Millar 1992²: 584–590; Corcoran 2000²: 167–169.
103. Commented upon even as early as Tacitus’s discussion of Nero (*Annales* XIII.3); cf. Fronto, *To Lucius Verus* II.1.5–9 (Haines 1919–20: II, 136–139).
104. Fronto, *On Speeches* 12 (Haines 1919–20: II, 112–113).
105. Honoré 1998: 134 even suggests that some quaestors composed texts, which tried to imitate an emperor’s idiosyncrasies.
106. Sherwin-White 1966: 536–546; cf. Williams 1976 and 1979 on various 2nd and 3rd century emperors.

107. Harries 2012.
108. Honoré 1975; 1978: 22–25. Procopius is actually critical of Justinian's personal involvement with imperial pronouncements (*Secret History* 14.3–4), which he regarded as inappropriate.
109. Millar 1992²: 69–83 (freedmen); Weaver 1972.
110. *Scriptores Historiae Augustae, Div. Hadr.* 11.3; *AE* 1973.73 (attesting several palatine posts). On equestrian secretaries, see Millar 1992²: 83–110.
111. On the various posts, see Millar 1992²: 69–110 and Jones 1964: 575–578. For the later empire, there survives the *Notitia Dignitatum* (Seeck 1876), a list from c. 400 of all government offices east and west, containing details of the *scrinia* and others concerned with the production of imperial texts: *Not. Dig. Or.* XI and XVIII–XIX and *Occ.* IX and XVI–XVII.
112. Harries 1988; Honoré 1998: 11–23.
113. Liebs 1987; 2010; Millar 1986; Corcoran 2000².
114. Honoré 1994²: 190–191; Liebs 2010: 51–89.
115. Honoré 1998: 275–277; Liebs 2010: 103–129; Coşkun 2001 on Ausonius.
116. Honoré 1978: 223–242; Liebs 2010: 134–151.
117. Honoré 1994²: 155, 162; Corcoran 2000²: 83–85, 90–91; Liebs 2010: 82–83.
118. Philostratus, *Vit. Soph.* II.33 (Millar 1992²: 93).
119. E.g. Aelius Antipater (Millar 1992²: 92–93, 227).
120. Honoré 1994²: 156–162; Corcoran 2000²: 77.
121. Honoré 1989 (rhetorical language obscures legal technicality); Corcoran 2000²: 161.
122. *AE* 1962.183; trans. Millar 1992²: 288.
123. *Variae* VI.5 (trans. Barnish 1992: 96–97). Book Six of the *Variae* consists entirely of such letters of appointment (25 in all).
124. Millar 1992²: 270.
125. Reflecting, no doubt, the quasi-judicial role of the *paterfamilias* in the private sphere, although that had largely disappeared by the imperial period: Crook 1967: 107–108.
126. Crook 1955; Millar 1992²: 268–269.
127. Note *CJ* I.51.1
128. Juvenal, *Satire* 4; Pliny, *Letters* VI.31. There was a stalled attempt under Augustus to establish a formal membership process (Millar 1992²: 268).
129. Thus Paulus records his participation in the *consilium* during hearings by Septimius Severus (Honoré 1994²: 20–25). For the presence of jurists as experts in the Severan period, see also Coriat 1997: 250–273.
130. Jones 1964: 333–341. A session was called a *silentium* and the ushers *silentiaries*. In Constantinople there developed joint sessions with the Senate termed *silentium et conventus* (Justinian, *Nov.* 62).
131. Justinian, *Institutes* I.5.3; Honoré 1978: 142–146. The Decisions were issued in batches during 530 and 531.
132. For the importance of *suggestiones*: Honoré 1998: 133–134; Millar 2006: 21–23, 207–214. Echoes of this system survive even in the seventh century, when we find Constans II issuing his privilege for the see of Ravenna (666) on the basis of a *relatio* of the archbishop of Ravenna and a *suggestio* of the exarch of Italy (Holder-Egger 1878: 350–351; Dölger 2009²: 109).
133. Kelly 2004. A consistory meeting was known as a *silentium*, since persons were not expected to speak unless addressed, which would hardly make for lively debate.
134. Feissel & Worp 1988; *ChLA* XLVI 1392.

135. Calder 1956: no. 305 with *AE* 1999.1577. See Feissel 1999a and Van Dam 2007: 150–162, 368–372 (I adapt here Van Dam’s translation). The petitioners’ success was probably aided by the fact that they and the vicar were Christians.
136. Damage to the inscription means that it is not clear what possessive, if any, was used in either passage. See Feissel 1999a: 259, 262.
137. E.g. the letter of Galerius and Maximinus to Heraclea Sintica (*AE* 2002.1293); Constantine to the Senate (*AE* 1934.158; now *CIL* VI 40776); letter of Justinian to the praetorian prefect of Africa (*CJ* I.27.1).
138. E.g. the first two examples in the previous footnote. See in general Corcoran 2013. Collegiality is extremely common in headings in the codes and other legal sources, although often with retrospective emendation or other editorial changes. For instance, Constantine is usually present alone in headings in the legal sources, despite never being a sole ruler: Corcoran 2000²: 279–281.
139. E.g. petition of the provincial council of Lycia-Pamphylia (Şahin 1994: no. 12); Augustine, *Letter* 88.2 (Corcoran 2000²: 155–56). The diplomatic elements in the *Relationes* of Symmachus as transmitted are very inconsistent in these matters (Barrow 1973: 15).
140. Corcoran 2000²: 318–323.
141. Corcoran 2000²: 335–336. For *carissime* and superlatives, see Dickey 2002: 132–133, 315, 335. For explanation of the apparent contradiction that *domine* was an acceptable form of address to emperors, while not acceptable as an actual title for emperors, see Dickey 2002: 96–97.
142. Frequent in Symmachus, *Relationes*: e.g. 6.2, 16.1, 31.3, 46.1.
143. Corcoran 2000²: 324–334.
144. On emperor and Senate, see Millar 1992²: 341–355. Note Fronto’s praise for Lucius Verus’s letter to the Senate reporting Parthian victories (Fronto, *To Verus* II.1; Haines 1919–20: II, 128–151).
145. E.g. Cicero, *Letters to his Friends* X.35 (Lepidus to the Senate); XII.15 (Lentulus to the Senate). Similar formulations can be used from generals to private correspondents.
146. *AE* 1934.158; now *CIL* VI 40776.
147. *Collectio Avellana* 113 (516); Engl. trans. Coleman-Norton 1966: III, no. 548; cf. Valentinian III, *Novel* 1.3 (450). Anastasius’s titulature includes the latest attestation of the tribunician power. Note that the inclusion of the proconsuls with the other addressees is an editorial error for what in fact is the emperor’s traditional title of proconsul (Cameron 2011: 53–54).
148. Suetonius, *Div. Aug.* 87–88; cf. Quintilian, *Inst.* I.1.28–29. See Millar 1992²: 215.
149. Eusebius, *Vit. Const.* IV.8; Millar 1992²: 219–220.
150. Millar 1992²: 215.
151. Julian, *Letters* 46.
152. Millar 1992²: 220.
153. Feissel 2008; Cavallo 2009: 120–123, 135–136, 139–143.
154. *CTh* IX.19.3 (367): they were to use only *litterae communes* (common script).
155. Feissel 2004a.
156. *Scriptores Historiae Augustae, Commod.* 13.7, with Millar 1992²: 222. The greetings in the Trajan-Pliny correspondence are simple, but even the brief farewell (*vale*) of the private correspondence is lacking, and we cannot be certain of the original form.

157. Corcoran 2000²: 146. Note the Brigetio tablet (fig. 7.8): *et manu divina: vale Dalmati carissime nobis* (AE 1937.232; FIRA² I no. 93; ARS no. 301). The greeting *Ave, Dalmati carissime nobis* is not marked as being in the emperor's hand.
158. Feissel & Worp 1988.
159. E.g. Justinian at *Collectio Avellana* 84.21 & 91.22 (= *CJ* I.1.8.24) (Coleman-Norton 1966: III no. 645); Maurice at *Epistulae Austrasicae* 42 (Dölger 2009²: 29); Heraclius, *Novels* 1, 2 and 4 (Konidaris 1982: 72, 78, 94); Justinian II to the pope (Riedinger 1992: 887). Papal subscriptions develop in a similar way (Mathisen 1998; note *Collectio Avellana* 84.31 = *CJ* I.1.8.39).
160. *CJ* I.23.6 (470).
161. Millar 1992²: 213.
162. *CIL* VI 2078 = 32374 lines 30–34 (Scheid 1998).
163. Thus the now lost sapphire intaglio depicting (and indeed naming) Constantius II on a boar hunt does not have the retrograde text expected of a seal. See Furtwängler 1900: III 364–365; cf. Ivanov 2013: 56–58 (although with the image confusingly reversed).
164. Thus an Egyptian customs receipt from 212 bearing a sealing with the images of Septimius Severus and Caracalla, but with the damned Geta defaced (*P.Mich. Inv.* 5763 = *Sammelbuch* VI 9234 = *P.Customs* no. 282; Husselman 1951).
165. Still 1995 (on early imperial sealings); Zacos & Vegler 1972: 3–5 (on imperial seals in the Byzantine period from 500 onwards). Constantine VII, *Book of Ceremonies* II.48 (trans. Moffatt & Tall 2012: 686–692) contains the discussion of imperial use of seals, but is interested only in the prestigious gold seals, for which earlier evidence is lacking.
166. Goulden 1977 (English royal signatures). It might be difficult to assemble an equivalent list of Roman imperial “signatures,” even if we had the original documents.
167. E.g. FIRA² III no. 132, where subscribed name and seal are used. Note also the lengthy lists of bishop's subscribed names approving Church council documents (e.g. Price & Gaddis 2005: I, 358–363; II: 93–110, 217–233; III, 76–84, 124–128; Price 2009: II, 126–139).
168. Theoderic: *Anonymus Valesianus* II.14.79; Justin: Procopius, *Anekdotai* 6.11. See Vasiliev 1950: 84.
169. For examples of monograms, see the list at *PLRE* III, 1556–1573. Monograms of Justinian appear on the capitals of S. Sophia in Constantinople.
170. Schramm 1954: 219–226; Weitzmann 1979: 58–59. The attribution is far from certain. Other Theoderic seals could be those of officials (Evans 2006: 124–125).
171. Gold ring, discovered in a rich burial near Tournai in 1653, but lost when most of the treasure was stolen and melted down in 1831. Three casts survive. There was also a sapphire ring with a royal image, but no legend. See Schramm 1954: 213–217; Dalas 1991: 77.
172. Sapphire, set in a gold ring of the 16th century, now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Antikensammlung inv. no. VIIb 23 (Schramm 1954: 217–219; Kornbluth 2008).
173. The royal seal confirmed the law of the Visigothic king Theudis added to the Breviary in 546, although the king also subscribed (*Lex Romana Visigothorum* IV.16.3 [Zeumer 1902: 467–469]). Note that punishment for anyone forging the royal seal on a document is laid down in *Lex Visigothorum* VII.5.1 (Zeumer 1902: 303), but

- based on a Roman law text about tampering with private documents (Paul, *Sentences* V.25.1 [*FIRA*² II, 410]). See discussions by Kornbluth 2008 and Bedos-Rezak 2010: 76–77.
174. An onyx cameo seal (Bivar 1969: 56 no. 119352, pl. 4 no. BC1; Gyselen 1993: 124 and cat. 140; cf. cat. 131, an amethyst of Queen Denak, probably 3rd century AD).
 175. Bivar 1969: 29–34.
 176. Gyselen 1993; 2006; Macuch 1997; Soucek 2002. It does at least seem to be the case that signet-rings are more typically Greco-Roman and stamp-seals Sasanian.
 177. Valentinian III, *Novel* 9; possibly Eusebius, *Vit. Const.* II.42 (Corcoran 2000²: 199); less certainly on the privilege of Constans II for Ravenna (Dölger 2009²: 109); cf. the famous if disputed Cleopatra “signature” (van Minnen 2000).
 178. Pliny, *Letters* X.7, 10. Compare the letter replying to the bishops of Numidia (Optatus, Appendix X, Edwards 2007: 198–201), which generated also letters to various officials, of which one partial text survives independently (*CTh* XVI.2.7); Matthews 2000: 270–274.
 179. E.g. *CTh* XI.28.9; *FIRA*² I no. 94; Corcoran 2000²: 201; 2007a: 240–241.
 180. Honoré 1998: 135.
 181. *Sirm.* 6; *CTh* XVI.2.47, XVI.5.62 and 64; Matthews 2000: 155–160.
 182. Feissel & Worp 1988; Bülow-Jacobsen 2009: 22.
 183. Hutchinson 2007: 23. Trajan’s replies to Pliny, at least as edited into Book 10, are all commendably brief and to the point.
 184. Millar 1992²: 313–317. On *tabulae* and their general importance, see Meyer 2004; Cooley 2012a: 73–82. The term “stylus tablet” is often used, since a sharpened stylus was employed to write by scoring the wax.
 185. Bowman & Thomas 1983: 33–45; 1994, ch. 3. Pliny the Younger refers repeatedly to *pugillares*, which could variously be stylus or ink tablets (e.g. *Letters* I.22.11, IX.6.1, IX.36.6). Unfortunately, the correspondence with Trajan in Book 10 is never explicit in regard to the formats of letters sent in either direction.
 186. *Not. Dig. Or.* XVIII–XIX and *Occ.* XVI–XVII (Seeck 1876: 42–43, 160–161).
 187. For the development of tablets in the 1st century AD with helpful illustrations, see Meyer 2004: 126–132. It was, of course, possible for numerous tablets to be bound together for much longer texts (polyptychs; Bülow-Jacobsen 2009: 23).
 188. *Inscriptions antiques du Maroc* II.94; Millar 1988: 359–360; 1992²: 261–262.
 189. Corcoran 2000²: 47; *FIRA*² I no. 82, now *I. Smyrna* 597 (Petzl 1982–90: II.1 80); *AE* 2008.1349; cf. *AE* 2009.1391 (governor’s rescript). Note the seven seals mentioned on the rescript of Gordian III to the Scaptoparenes (Hauken 1998: 124–125), previously misinterpreted by Millar 1992²: 247 as the imperial seal.
 190. In 641, George, exarch of Africa, rejected a letter of the empress Martina as a forgery, although he had political reasons for so doing (Conant 2013: 46).
 191. Thus note Galerius recalling *adnotationes* for checking; Corcoran 2007a: 227. Suetonius claims that Claudius’s freedmen altered or substituted codicils (*Div. Claud.* 29.1).
 192. *P. Abinn.* 1 (Kelly 2004: 199).
 193. On the use of private seals, see Meyer 2004: 154–156. Symmachus certainly used his seal on his private correspondence (*Letters* II.12), but there is no explicit evidence for the *Relationes*.
 194. Millar 1992²: 217.

195. Ammianus Marcellinus XV.5.3–13.
196. Matthews 1989: 37–38.
197. The four imperial documents actually survive as part of the text. Elsewhere Pliny deliberately omits documents not thought authentic (*Letters* X.65).
198. Forwarding of petitions was not normal practice: Corcoran 2000²: 44.
199. E.g. *CTh* XIII.4.2 (*CJ* X.66.1); *CJ* XII.23.7 and XII.59.10; Justinian, *Novel* 8; Onur 2012; cf. Cassiodorus, *Variae* XII.5.3.
200. Corcoran, forthcoming.
201. Note the discussion at Barrow 1973: 17–19.
202. Feissel & Worp 1988; cf. *exemplum precum* at Orcistus, which must have derived from what Constantine sent to Ablabius (*MAMA* VII.305). See section 2.1.3 above.
203. The need for Roman law oral procedures or written documents to be in Latin was gradually relaxed for some groups (e.g. soldiers) or types of text (e.g. testamentary trusts) even in the Principate, and this was gradually extended after the universal enfranchisement of 212, which made all free inhabitants of the empire into Roman citizens. By the end of our period any document could be in Greek, and some even in Coptic or Syriac. See for instance the case of wills as discussed by Nowak 2010. Indeed, Greek became the default language of all law.
204. Corcoran 2000²: 46. Note *FIRA*² I no. 82, now *I. Smyrna* 597 (Antoninus Pius to Smyrna).
205. E.g. Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.17.11 (apparently Eusebius's own translation of a text never publicly posted in Palestine [Latin original at Lactantius, *De Mort. Pers.* 34]; elsewhere he uses copies of translations that could have been publicly posted: *Hist. Eccl.* IX.7.3, 9a.1); cf. inscribed *sermo* of Anastasius from Perge described as translated (Onur 2012).
206. *AE* 2004.1402; Feissel 2004b.
207. *CIL* III 448 & 7151; *I. Mylasa* no. 611 (Blümel 1987: 225–26); Millar 2006: 21–22; cf. *I. Ephesos* I, no. 43 (375); *CTh* IX.45.4–5 and *CJ* I.12.3 (431), with Stolte 2009; *FIRA*² I no. 97 (527). Although not a letter, much is made of the relationship of the Latin and Greek versions of Augustus' *Res Gestae* from Galatia: Cooley 2009; 2012: 171–178.
208. Scheltema 1970: 52–57.
209. Mason 1974.
210. Avotins 1989; 1992; Burgmann 1990.
211. Unusually Julian wrote to Ecdicius, prefect of Egypt, in both Greek and Latin (*CTh* XV.1.8–9; *CJ* VIII.11.3–4; Julian, *Letters* 45, 46 and 49 [Wright; Loeb]). See Harries 2012: 123.
212. Corcoran 2007a.
213. Thus the Greek promulgation edict of Fulvius Asticus (Prices Edict; Phrygia/Caria: *AE* 1997.1443); cf. Aristius Optatus (Census in Egypt; *P. Cair. Isid.* 1). Translated texts as in Achaëa (Prices Edict Tariff; 1st Caesariani decree [*JG* II/III² 1121 and 13249]). See Corcoran 2000²: 231–232, 245–246; Corcoran 2007a: 226.
214. Skeat 1964.
215. Matthews 2006: 33–34.
216. Millar 2006.
217. Millar 2006: 20–23.
218. Kelly 2004: 34–35.

219. Justinian, *Institutes* III.7.3 re *CJ* VI.4.4 (531), whose exact format and addressees are uncertain.
220. For an analysis and discussion of when and why Novels were issued in Greek and/or Latin under Justinian, see Kaiser 2012.
221. Note the vestigial Latin present in only the subscripts to the Greek novels of Heraclius (Konidaris 1982: 72, 78, 84, 94), and a single Latin word in the middle of a grant of Justinian II (688/9; *IG* X/2/1 no. 24 line 8; Dölger 2009²: 129–130). Latin letters to Italy (e.g. to the pope) might also still be written and even subscribed in Latin: e.g. Justinian II to John V (Riedinger 1992: 887; Dölger 2009²: 128–129); the *privilegium* of Constans II for Ravenna (666 at Syracuse; Dölger 2009²: 109). Official Latin survived longest on coins and imperial seals, the last vestiges not disappearing until the 11th century.
222. On the *cursus* see Kolb 2000: especially 49–226, with a brief but excellent synopsis in Kolb 2001; cf. Jones 1964: 830–834.
223. Lemcke 2012; Coşkun & Lemcke 2013. In the very early Principate, status alone created entitlement, but permits soon became mandatory. Note the famous bilingual *angareia* decree of the governor of Galatia from Sagalassos, with detailed regulations for the use of the *cursus* (*AE* 1976.653; re-edited by Horsley 2007: no. 335).
224. *Letters* X. 45–46; cf. Pliny's caution over the use of a permit by his wife, although Trajan approves (*Letters* X.121–122).
225. A key feature of the abuses documented in petitions: e.g. Hauken 1998; *AE* 2009.1429.
226. Pliny, *Letters* X.64.
227. Kolb 2001: 98–99.
228. Governors probably used soldiers as messengers (Millar 1992²: 215–216). Later there are corps of messengers across both central and local administration (e.g. on the staff of the praetorian prefect of Africa; *CJ* I.27.1.31) and officials ceased to bring with them their own personal staff for administrative purposes (Slootjes 2006: 28).
229. *Collectio Avellana* 110–114. This, however, is more akin to a diplomatic exchange than internal communication, and the pope issued detailed instructions to his own envoys on how to deal with the emperor (*Collectio Avellana* 115–116). See Gillett 2003: 227–230.
230. Kolb 2001: 100. On internal sea communications, see the comments of Millar 1982: 10. Government involvement with sea-transport was primarily focussed upon provisioning, such as wheat for Rome, rather than communication: Jones 1964: 827–830.
231. Augustine, *Epistulae* 88.2. See Corcoran 2000²: 155–156; cf. Kuhrt, this volume (p. 140).
232. E.g. Peachin 1990 and Duncan-Jones 1990: 7–29. In general see Kolb 2000: 308–332. Note now ORBIS, The Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World (<http://orbis.stanford.edu/>) (Scheidel & Meeks 2012), which provides a model for calculating travel times around the empire, allowing for variations in types of transport and time of year.
233. These are tetrarchic examples from my book: Corcoran 2000²: 157–158, 304–305. Fuller list in Jones 1964: III, 91–93. From the level of local administration, note *P. Panop. Beatty* 2 (Skeat 1964: xxiii–xxiv).
234. *CTh* XIII.9.3.3 (November to March).

235. *FIRA*² I no. 91 (*ARS* no. 155; edict on time-limits for appeals); Jones 1964: 494–496. One prefect of Egypt put a 10-day expiry date on his rescripts granting leave to approach his tribunal (*P. Oxy.* XLII 3017; Kelly 2011: 99–100). Connolly 2010: 56 is surely wrong to think this meant he promised to *answer* petitions within 10 days.
236. *CTh* I.5.4; XI.30.31; Slootjes 2006: 34.
237. *CTh* XI.30.29. Such fines are standard in the late empire as an encouragement to governors and their office-staff to implement the rules in imperial missives. For a fine actually exacted, note Libanius, *Letter* 21 (Slootjes 2006: 96).
238. Petrus Patricius, *frag.* 8 (*Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum* IV, 186–187); Millar 1982: 11.
239. *Collectio Avellana* 14–16 (Engl. trans. 15 only, Coleman-Norton 1966: II, no. 355); Jones 1964: 402–403.
240. Ammianus Marcellinus XVIII.6.
241. On this episode, see Matthews 1989: 40–41; Lenssen 1999.
242. Josephus, *Ant. Jud.* XVIII.261–309 and *Bell. Jud.* II.184–203; Philo, *Legatio ad Gaium* 207–333; Smallwood 1976: 175–179. The two ancient authors are not entirely consistent with one another.
243. Presumably brought by a new messenger directly to Pliny (so Sherwin-White 1966: 650).
244. Tacitus, *Annales* I.6.3; Dio Cassius LIII.19.
245. Seneca, *Letters* 83.15; cf. typical criticism by Procopius of Justinian for penning his own confidential correspondence (*Secret History* 14.4).
246. John Malalas, *Chronicle* XIV.45 (Thurn 2000: 296–298; Jeffreys et al. 1986: 207).
247. Connolly 2010: 58–61; 205. We can also see rescripts being posted up on successive days in Alexandria in March 200 (*P. Columbia* 123; Millar 1992²: 244–245).
248. However, Williams 1990: 4 presumes the necessity of imperial permission.
249. Matthews 2010: 216 refers to his Symmachus’s “systematic reticence.”
250. *Collatio Mosaicarum et Romanarum Legum* III.3.1–3 (*FIRA*² II, 551). For Ulpian’s influence, note *I. Ephesos* II, no. 217 (Börker & Merkelbach 1979: 30) with Kantor 2009.
251. Corcoran 2000²: 245–249.
252. Valentinian III, *Novel* 14 (444; trans. Pharr). These explicit instructions survive best (and with great frequency) in the unedited Novels, since otherwise edited out in the codes: e.g. Theodosius II, *Nov.* 19.3, 20.5 (omitted at *CJ* XI.66.7, VII.41.3). For *benevolentia*, note also *Inscr. Cret.* I.18.189 (Corcoran 2007a: 240).
253. Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum* 13.2–3.
254. Corcoran 2000²: 246–247.
255. E.g. Libanius, *Oration* 1 (*Autobiography*) 157. Note that Aemilius Rectus posted up a letter of Claudius at Alexandria precisely because not everyone could attend the public reading (*ARS* no. 167.I, AD 41).
256. For places within Rome see Corcoran 2000²: 188. The embolos in Ephesus came to be lined by numerous inscribed copies of imperial letters: Feissel 1999b. For the display of the Prices Edict at Aphrodisias and elsewhere, see Crawford 2002.
257. *AE* 1937.232 (*FIRA*² I, no. 93); *AE* 2007.1224.
258. On the abolition of Licinius’s acts and memory, see Corcoran 2000²: 275–279. The Durostorum copy has no indication of alteration, although the lower portion, where subscription and date might have been, is lost.

259. Corcoran 2000²: 231–232; 2007a: 226. To gubernatorial initiative is also ascribed the copies of the *Res gestae* in Galatia, and the Germanicus documents (e.g. *Senatus consultum de Pisone patre*) in Baetica (Corcoran 2007a: 223–224; Cooley 2012). Recently identified copies of these documents from other provinces need not reflect the same dynamics in each case. Thus the *Res Gestae* at Sardeis (Buckler & Robinson 1932: 155, so identified by Thonemann in 2012); *Senatus consultum de Pisone* from Geneva (*AE* 2009.839); cf. *Tabula Hebana* (Sherk 1988: 67–71).
260. Thus Aphrodisias emphasizes her own privileges by inscribing refusals to other cities: Reynolds 1982: 104–115, nos. 13–14; now Reynolds, Roueché & Bodard 2007: nos. 8.32–33 (Augustus to Samos and Trajan to Smyrna; fig. 7.2); cf. the Muni-gua letter of Titus (*AE* 1962.288).
261. Corcoran 2000²: 54–57.

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